Brandywine beats Kent City in battle of unbeatens

Page B1

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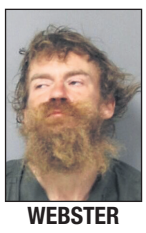
Area residents sentenced to prison, jail

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

BEARD

HAULCOMB



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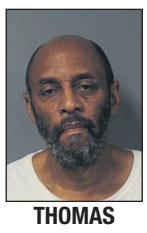

THOMAS

VANKIRK

NILES — Two area residents were sentenced to prison and three others to jail in sentencings Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse.

Rickey Dale Beard, 30, of South Bend, pleaded no contest to assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder and resisting and obstructing police and was sentenced to 29 months to 10 years in prison on the assault charge and credit for 98 days served on the resisting and obstructing charge. He must pay $266 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Aug. 22 in Niles when he assaulted both his girlfriend and police.

His girlfriend spoke before the sentencing and said that Beard has been working to maintain his sobriety since the incident. She said that he had never resisted police before this occasion. "It's shaken him to not be able to be around his children," she said.

Beard apologized to the officers and his girlfriend. "I'm nothing short of embarrassed and ashamed," he said. "I'm shaken to the foundation of my core."

He said that he chose to drown his heartbreak in alcohol when one of his young children died at only 16 weeks old and the grief was unbearable. "That led to this atrocious situation that I caused," he said. "I will guarantee my sobriety in the future, I won't let anyone down."

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein noted that Beard pleaded no contest because of his intoxication. "Unfortunately the guidelines don't allow me to give you probation," he said. "These were serious actions and consequences whether you were intoxicated or not."

Timothy Craig VanKirk, 37, of South Bend, pleaded guilty to third-degree home invasion and was sentenced to 14 months to five years in prison and $373 in fines, costs and restitution. He has no credit for time served as he was on parole in Indiana at the time of the incident.

The incident occurred June 6 in Niles.

Defense attorney Daniel French said that his client has come "full circle" and is remorseful about what happened. "He's remorseful for what he put everyone through, he's grown and learned from it," he said.

For his part, VanKirk apologized for his actions. "I want to apologize to everybody," he said. "I take full responsibility, I made a very bad choice. I want to move on with my life."

Melvin Duane Thomas, 57, of South Bend, pleaded guilty to first-degree retail fraud and was sentenced to a year in jail, $198 in fines and costs and $3,599.97 in

See **SENTENCES**, page A6

Forged Fit 24 to open in Niles Township

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — Niles area residents looking for a round-the-clock workout have a new option on the south side of town.

Forged Fit 24, 2216 S. 11th St, Niles, is gearing up to open its doors next weekend for its soft opening. The 24-hour gym, owned by Niles natives Matt Mazingo and Kevin Doss, offers free weights, cardio equipment, tanning beds, a 1,500-square-foot astral turf area for speed and agility training, a sauna, red light therapy and more in an 8,500-square-foot facility. The staff is trained in basic life-saving, AED, and CPR and will have an AED on site.

"We don't want to sell memberships until people feel comfortable with what they are getting," Doss said. "We're not here to trap anyone in a deal or hold them hostage. The soft opening gives friends, family, and the community a chance to try the equipment. If anything needs work, it gives us time to fix it before the grand opening."

For Mazingo and Doss, Forged Fit 24 was born out of a desire to provide "holistic health" and high-quality equipment to both south Niles and north Indiana, areas with scarce fitness options.

"There isn't a gym of this size with this type of equipment in the area," Mazingo said. "People in Clay Township or South Bend usually have to travel to Mishawaka or Granger to work out. Now we can save them that travel time."

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Forget Fit 24 will open its doors to the community next weekend.

Mazingo, a Navy veteran and former gym owner, and Doss purchased the building formerly home to Ground Zero Archery in the summer and have spent the past five months preparing to open. Doss said that Forged Fit 24 will offer discounts for veterans, active-duty police, fire, EMS, teachers and school employees. He added that they hope to partner with local businesses for corporate fitness.

"Studies show that fit employees are more productive and have lower healthcare costs," he said. "If a business has five or more employees interested in fitness, they can call us to work out a multi-member plan."

Mazingo has seen the perception of the fitness industry shift in a positive way over the years and looks forward to being part of the fitness industry in Niles once again.

"The fitness industry has done a complete 180 since we were in school," he said. "Now everyone is into supplements and there are a lot of people in Niles alone that have a huge following in the fitness industry. It's awesome to see we're excited to see what we can bring to the area with this larger space. We can invite top-tier athletes to work out, which brings exposure to the gym."

Mazingo and Doss look forward to helping community members reach their goals.

"There's so much more excitement than I ever would have thought," Mazingo said. "I enjoy partnering with Kevin, he has a niche for what he does and I have a niche for what I do on the construction side and it's working out well."

"We're hoping that we have something for everyone," Doss said. "We'd like to welcome everyone. We also understand we might not be for everyone but when you come in here, we want you to feel welcome. We want to create a good culture where people want to be here."

A Pleasant president

Dr. Pleasant appointed as new SMC President

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College has found its new president.

At a special public meeting on Dec. 29, the Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees voted to appoint Dr. Klint Pleasant of Rochester Hills, Mich., to the position of college President. He is currently the Senior Vice President and special assistant to the President at Rochester Christian University.

PLEASANT

Pending contract negotiations, Dr. Pleasant would become SMC's ninth president. The college's eighth president, Dr. Joe Odenwald, stepped down in May 2025 to become President of Alma College. Brent Brewer has served as Interim President since then.

Dr. Pleasant has worked in higher education for 28 years and has spent the last 20 years in administration. He has managed enrollment, athletics, development, as well as having leadership responsibilities in retention, student mentoring and community relations. He has also served as an instructor in the classroom.

Further details including Dr. Pleasant's background and potential starting date will be forthcoming in the new year.

BCF grants to focus on health, community support

By PMG STAFF

The Berrien Community Foundation recently awarded $239,500 in For Good Grants to Berrien County nonprofits, whose work directly supports physical and mental health, youth well-being and access to essential services.

More than $43,000 was awarded to support programs in the greater Niles area.

"Many of our fall 2025 For Good Grants are addressing the most fundamental building blocks of a healthy community," BCF Program Director Susan Matheny said in a news release. "From behavioral health to youth stability and prevention programs, these grants will make an immediate and measurable difference in Berrien County – made possible by the generosity of our donors, whose commitment to community impact allows this work to happen."

According to the release, For Good Grants are awarded twice a year. Each cycle, applications are reviewed by community volunteers and T.E.A.M. (Teens Exhibiting Able Minds) – the youth advisory committee for the foundation.

Requests cover a broad range of community needs including the arts, children, community development, education, environment, health, seniors, as well as youth leadership and development.

"Consistent with our mission, BCF also continues to support humanities and arts-based programs that strengthen our community and add to our cultural vitality as well as funding essential needs," Matheny said in the release. "We fund these efforts through our community endowment and in partnership with donor advised fund holders, whose support allows more grant requests to be fulfilled."

Among the programs and organizations to receive grants in the latest round of the For Good Grants include:

Five Pines Ministries will fund the purchase of new snow tubes for use on Five Pines' "Grandpa's Snow Tubing Hill."

Michiana Public Broadcasting Corporation will prove general operating support for WNIT.

Tarragindi Initiative will receive funding for a local PhD archaeologist to supervise a dig where the 1830s county jail used to sit at The History Center at Courthouse Square in Berrien Springs.

Ferry Street Resource Center is providing emergency assistance and life-planning coaching to households in need.

Meals on Wheels of Southwest Michigan plans to expand access to nutritious, medically appropriate meals for seniors.

Other grants

In addition to the grants listed above, other grants were also awarded to the Benton Harbor Public

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Michael B. Terry
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Comics	B5	Home & Garden	C7	Television	D3

FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Happy New Year! Time to start fresh. Forget the old and focus on the new!

■ I'm all for forgiveness and second chances. But, third chances, fourth chances and fifth chances? I don't think so. Tough love is tough for a reason.

■ Probation for a pipe attack?

■ Kudos to the Niles City Council for voting to approve new police equipment. This ain't Mayberry.

■ Thank you, Pastor Wade Panse, for an incredibly blessed 10 years with Cassopolis United Methodist Church.

■ I used to pray for peace. Now I just pray for the people having the ability to create peace. One individual can end the Ukraine War. One human being can say "enough is enough."

■ Estimates are nearly 500,000 lost lives for the Ukrainian/ Russian conflict. All of these losses for what? Pride? Security? A bright future? History has shown that a piece of paper with a signature means absolutely nothing.

■ America First is fine, but we live on planet Earth, not planet America. A rising tide lifts all boats.

Photo provided

Fennec Fox kittens Sonny and Lucy.

Fennec fox kits receive names

SUBMITTED

SOUTH BEND — The Potawatomi Zoo is delighted to announce the names of its fennec fox kits, born September 26. The two females and one male have been named Lucy, Jewel, and Sonny by J.R. Fox Jewelers.

"We're so pleased to partner with J.R. Fox Jewelers on the care of these fox kits," says Josh Sisk, executive director of the Potawatomi Zoo. "They've been such great supporters of the fennec foxes for several years, and we're thrilled that they've had the opportunity to name our first kits in recent memory."

Fennec foxes are a small, nocturnal species of fox native to desert and semi-arid habitats throughout the Sahara desert and North Africa. Although they are territorial, they often live in small communities in neighboring dens. Fennec foxes are territorial, using both scent marking and vocalizations to communicate with other foxes.

Fennec foxes are known for their large ears, which both help them hunt prey and dispel heat. They also have fur all over the bottoms of their feet to protect them from hot sand.

Fennec foxes mate for life, and typically have a litter of kits, also known as pups, once per year.

Because there is a significant, stable population of fennec foxes in the wild, they are considered of least concern for extinction by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), However, they are still susceptible to habitat loss and at risk from illegal pet trade. They are legally protected in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt.

Sonny and Lucy are named after Sonny and Lucy Fox, parents of the J.R. Fox Jewelers founders, and Jewel is named in tribute to the J.R. Fox Jewelers business.

As Sue Demeter, chief financial officer at J.R. Fox Jewelers says, "We're so proud that our Fox Family is growing."

Michigan awarded $173 million in federal funding to strengthen rural health

SUBMITTED

LANSING — This week, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services was awarded $173,128,201 for FY 2026 by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services under the Rural Health Transformation Program.

"Today's investment will support access to health care for rural communities across Michigan as we deal with funding shortfalls caused by federal Medicaid cuts," said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. "This $173 million grant will help us connect more Michiganders to the care they need and provide essential wraparound supports. In Michigan, we have successfully worked together to protect quality, affordable health care, and we will continue finding ways to secure more federal funds, expand coverage and lower costs."

The Rural Health Transformation Program is a $50 billion national commitment to improve the health and well-being of rural communities across the country. With this funding, states will implement comprehensive strategies to improve care delivery, support providers and advance new approaches to coordinating health care services across rural communities. Funding will be allocated over five years, with $10 billion available each year from 2026 through 2030.

"Michigan continues to support a resilient and innovative rural health system where every resident has access to high-quality care close to home," said Elizabeth Hertel, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services director. "Our approved proposal for these federal funds focuses on enhancing the long-term sustainability of rural providers while supporting their growth and continued service to their communities."

Before submitting its application, MDHHS hosted an online survey and two listening sessions to gather input on how the funding could help increase and improve sustainability for rural providers.

Based on that feedback, MDHHS requested funding to:

Support the development and strengthening of regional partnerships among rural hospitals, clinics and community organizations to improve care coordination, align service delivery, expand access points and promote financially sustainable care models.

Recruit and retain rural health professionals, behavioral health providers and community health workers. Funds will also promote prevention and chronic disease management training and integrated behavioral health care access.

Implement technology tools and advance rural interoperability, including establishing a rural technology catalyst fund to support expanding data exchange and increasing adoption of telehealth, remote patient monitoring and technology-driven care coordination tools.

Establish digital referral networks that connect residents to local care, prevention and wellness resources needed to live healthy lives.

For more information about Michigan's plan for the funding, visit the MDHHS Rural Health Transformation Program website.

Buchanan woman injured in single-vehicle crash in Wayne Township

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

WAYNE TOWNSHIP — A 61-year-old Buchanan woman was injured Saturday in a single-vehicle crash in Wayne Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Clint Roach reports that at approximately 10:56 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 27, deputies responded to a single vehicle crash on Twin Lakes Road and Dutch Settlement Street in Wayne Township.

The investigation showed that a vehicle driven by Mary Cloud, 61, of Buchanan, was northbound on Twin Lakes Road near Dutch Settlement Street when she lost control of her vehicle, left the roadway and crashed into a tree. Cloud was transported by SMCAS Ambulance to Niles Hospital for injuries sustained in the traffic crash.

Assisting agencies on scene were SMCAS Ambulance, Cass Fire Department, and Wayne Township Fire Department.

Wightman to celebrate 80th anniversary throughout 2026

SUBMITTED

BENTON HARBOR — Wightman is preparing to celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2026. Beginning in January, the firm will celebrate this significant milestone by launching a year-long celebration recognizing eight decades of partnership, innovation and community impact across the Great Lakes region.

Founded in November 1946, Wightman has grown from a small, local practice into an award-winning, multidisciplinary consulting firm known for its commitment to excellence in architecture, civil engineering, and surveying, along with expanded services in interior design, GIS, and reality capture.

The company's story began when G.L. Wightman, a young engineer and surveyor, opened a one-room office in the Commercial Bank building in downtown St. Joseph, Mich. In a post-World War II era marked by optimism, growth, and new beginnings, his vision set the foundation for what would become a trusted, award-winning architecture, engineering, and surveying firm. From that modest start, Wightman has grown into a multidisciplinary team serving clients across commercial, education, energy, and government sectors, delivering successful projects through industry expertise, clear and comprehensive scope, and a passion for listening.

Over the decades, Wightman has expanded its reach and capabilities through strategic leadership transitions, office openings across Michigan and Indiana, and a series of acquisitions and consolidations that strengthened the firm's service offerings. Each chapter has been guided by the same principles G.L. Wightman championed: professional integrity, quality service, and an unwavering commitment to clients and community.

"Our 80th anniversary is more than a milestone; it's a celebration of the clients, partners, employees, and communities who have trusted us for generations," said Steve Carlisle, president of Wightman. "As we celebrate our past, we're equally energized by the future and our continued commitment to creating lasting solutions that enhance the places where we live, learn, work, and play."

As part of the year-long celebration, Wightman stated it will share key project highlights from its work over the last 80 years, spotlight employees who have helped shape the firm's legacy and engage with partners through events and initiatives that reflect the firm's commitment to service and community.

For more information about Wightman or the services it offers, visit gowightman.com.

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OBITUARIES

Floyd Elrod

August 8, 1939 – December 20, 2025

Floyd Earl Elrod, 86, of Niles, died peacefully Saturday, December 20, 2025. His life began August 8, 1939 in Manchester, Tennessee, one of ten children born to Emmett and Alice Elrod. He married SherryAnn Olson in the '60's in Niles. Floyd loved fishing, gardening, and woodworking. He enjoyed eating, especially homemade tacos at his place. Floyd will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by daughters, Brenda Elrod, Sandra (Jim) Shafer, both of Niles; five grandchildren, Shawn, Rebecca, Levi, Kylie, Grant; four great grandchildren, Ryder, Taytum, Nova, Ryleigh; his cats, Lassie, and Tony. He was preceded in death by his parents; his beloved wife; son, Rodney Earl Elrod. The family will observe a private remembrance. Floyd will be laid to rest in Mission Hills Memorial Gardens. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritter wickens.com.

Michael B. Terry

June 4, 1963 – December 23, 2025

Michael B. Terry, 62, of Cassopolis, passed away peacefully Tuesday, December 23, 2025, surrounded by his loving family. His life began June 4, 1963, in Elkhart, Indiana, one of three children born to Carl and Carol Terry. He married the love of his life, Ramona G. Benjamin July 7, 1990, in Cassopolis, Michigan. Mike was a proud alumnus and dedicated fan of Michigan State University. He proudly served in the Cassopolis Fire Department, where he met Ramona in the back of an ambulance as her trainee. He was a devoted farmer who cherished time in his combine, driving through the fields, and walking among the corn. Mike enjoyed hunting and ice fishing, but it was his love of dirt that earned him the affectionate title of "Pig Pen." Above all, Mike treasured spending time with his grandchildren. A man of deep faith, he loved reading scripture and engaging in meaningful faith-based discussions. He was a hardworking provider for his cherished family and a true workaholic at heart. Mike's coworkers fondly called him "Papa Smurf" due to his signature blue pants, white beard, and caring nature toward everyone around him. Mike will be greatly missed by his family and friends. He is survived by his wife of thirty-five years, Ramona Terry of Cassopolis; daughter, Erin (Derek) Rutledge of Edwardsburg; son, Isaiah Terry of Cassopolis; three grandchildren, Morgan, Alison, and Thomas; mother, Carol Terry of Cassopolis; father, Carl Terry of Spring City, Tennessee; sister, Colleen Pegura of Edwardsburg; brother, Patrick (Lisa) Terry of Edwardsburg; brothers-in-law, Russel (Kelly) Benjamin of Cassopolis, Robert (Debbie) Benjamin of Plainwell, Michigan; and a host of nieces and nephews. Family and friends will gather Friday, January 2, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. until time of service at 12:00 noon in Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis, Michigan. The family prefers contributions in memory of Mike be made to the Central Cass Fire Department, 23201 M-60, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031. Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

George Hall

January 9, 1942 – December 24, 2025

George Keith Hall, a man who lived his life with a passion for the open road and a love for his family, passed away at 2:30 am on Wednesday, December 24, 2025, in his home surrounded by his loving wife and family. Born on January 9, 1942, in Dowagiac, MI, George's journey through life was one marked by dedication, resilience, and the joy of creation. George's early years in Dowagiac laid the foundation for a life of hard work and ingenuity. He was the son of the late Carrol and Rosa (Dell) Hall and was preceded in death by his brother, Edward Hall; and stepdaughter, Mary McPhail. George's family was his compass, guiding him through the many chapters of his life. On November 21, 1988, he married the love of his life, Betty Jane (Owen) Hall, and together they built a family that included sons, Dennis Hall, Mark Hall, Kenneth (Sharon) Fobes, and Anthony (Carolyn) Fobes; and daughter, Dawn High. His brothers Rolland and Robert (Janet) Hall, along with his sister Carolyn Henderson, also held special places in his heart. George's professional life was characterized by his tenure at Ameriwood Industries and his dedicated service in maintenance at Ascension Borgess Hospital. His work ethic was unparalleled, and his ability to fix anything was nothing short of legendary. George took pride in building his home from scratch, pouring his heart and soul into every nail and beam, ensuring it was a warm and welcoming place for all who entered. Beyond his professional achievements, George's true passions were his Harley's, trucks, Corvettes, and motorcycles. He was a familiar face at car shows, where he shared his love for classic and powerful machines with fellow enthusiasts. George's hands were rarely still, as he was always tinkering, repairing, or improving something. His ability to explain complex things in simple terms made him a cherished mentor and friend. George's legacy is not only in the tangible things he built and fixed but also in the intangible lessons of love, perseverance, and joy he imparted to his family. He leaves behind a legacy of 14 grandchildren, many great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren, each of whom will carry a piece of his spirit into the future. While there will be no services at this time, George will be laid to rest in South Wayne Cemetery at a later date, where his memory will be honored by those who loved him most. Palmer Funeral Home – Hoven Chapel is assisting the family with arrangements. Condolences may be made at www.palmerfuneralhomes.com. George Keith Hall's journey through life was a testament to the power of love, the value of hard work, and the beauty of sharing one's passions. He will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him, and his memory will continue to inspire and comfort his family and friends for generations to come.

Steven Benjamin

Steven John Benjamin, 64, of Dowagiac, Michigan, passed away on December 23, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Obituary policy

Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $15. Extended obituaries are priced based on character count.

If there's an error because of a mistake made by the newspaper, the obituary will be reprinted at no charge.

For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

Tatiana Schlossberg, granddaughter of JFK, dies at 35 from cancer

By JOSEPH WILKINSON
New York Daily News (TNS)

NEW YORK — Tatiana Schlossberg, the granddaughter of John F. Kennedy, died Tuesday just over a month after revealing her terminal cancer diagnosis. She was 35.

Schlossberg announced in a Nov. 22 essay that she had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia and given a year to live. She was first diagnosed in May 2024.

"Our beautiful Tatiana passed away this morning. She will always be in our hearts," several Kennedy family members wrote Tuesday in social media posts shared by the JFK Library Foundation.

Schlossberg was the daughter of the 35th president's daughter, Caroline Kennedy, and Caroline's husband, Edwin Schlossberg. She had two children of her own, a son and daughter, with her husband, George Moran.

In fact, it was after giving birth to her second child that Schlossberg was diagnosed with leukemia.

"I did not – could not – believe that they were talking about me," she wrote in November for the New Yorker. "I had swum a mile in the pool the day before, nine months pregnant. I wasn't sick. I didn't feel sick. I was actually one of the healthiest people I knew."

Study: Mammograms may reveal hidden heart risks

By ROBERTA BURKHART
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Routine mammograms are best known as a front-line tool for detecting breast cancer. But new research suggests the same X-ray images may also offer an early warning sign for cardiovascular disease – the leading cause of death among women.

A study presented at a Dec. 3 Radiological Society of North America meeting found that calcium deposits visible in the arteries of the breast can help predict a woman's future risk of heart attack, heart failure, stroke and death. The findings add to growing evidence that mammograms may hold value beyond cancer screening.

The condition that mammograms can detect – and act as an early warning of heart problems down the road – is called breast arterial calcification, said Matthew Nudy, an assistant professor of medicine and public health sciences at Penn State College of Medicine who presented the findings.

Breast arterial calcification, or BAC, is relatively common, appearing in an estimated 15 percent to 25 percent of screening mammograms. Yet it is not routinely reported.

Despite often being discernible on routine mammograms, radiologists do not typically report the presence of these calcifications "because there's no known association between this breast arterial calcification and breast cancer," Nudy said.

That omission may represent a missed opportunity – particularly for women, who often face delays in cardiovascular diagnosis.

In the new study, researchers analyzed data from 10,348 women who had undergone at least two mammograms at a U.S. academic medical center, with an average of 4.1 years between scans. Using an artificial intelligence tool, the team measured the severity and progression of calcification in breast arteries over time.

They found that nearly 1 in 5 women had detectable vascular calcification at baseline. More importantly, the severity and progression of that calcification mattered. Women with worsening calcium buildup faced significantly higher risks of major cardiovascular events – up to double the risk for those with the most severe scores, Nudy explained.

One of the most striking findings was how quickly changes could occur.

"We saw progression of this BAC, or breast arterial calcification, in as little as one year," Nudy said. "So I think it just goes to show that cardiovascular risk is something that changes all the time."

End of Detroit newspapers' JOA heralds new era of competition

By SUMMER BALLENTINE
The Detroit News (TNS)

A nearly four-decade-long business partnership between The Detroit News and Detroit Free Press ended Sunday, pitting the newspapers against each other financially at a time when few other U.S. cities support two major papers.

Free Press owner USA TODAY Co., formerly known as Gannett Co. Inc., and MediaNews Group – owner of The News – in June opted against renewing the long-standing agreement, thus ending among the last such tie-ups in the country. The companies have not provided further reasoning behind the split.

The News announced Friday it will launch a Sunday edition Jan. 18, at which point it will once again print newspapers all seven days. Other changes include makeovers for the detroitnews.com website and mobile app, an updated print design and a refreshed eNewspaper, Editor and Publisher Gary Miles said. The changes are expected to take place during a roughly month-long transition period.

The end of the Detroit joint operating agreement (JOA) marks the end of an era in U.S. newspapers. Aside from a contentious Las Vegas partnership that was ruled invalid earlier this year, the Detroit JOA was the last major JOA still in existence, and the only one in which both newspapers emerged to print seven days and compete on all digital platforms.

"To the JOA's credit, there are two newspapers to this day in metropolitan Detroit," said Mark Silverman, who was editor and publisher of The News from 1997 to 2005. "So that's clearly a positive. And both newspapers had very different editorial page positions. That's a positive for a community."

Joint operating agreements were cost-saving measures allowed by the Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970, which permitted two newspapers in the same city to merge their business operations to protect diversity in opinion and newsgathering. If approved by the federal government, the newsrooms continued to compete, but companies saved overhead costs associated with newsprint, printing presses and distribution.

"Even in the federal government, there was some understanding of the value of journalism and the value of preserving those voices," said Carole Leigh Hutton, a former Detroit News editor and the Free Press' former editor and publisher.

In virtually all cases outside of Detroit, newspapers concluded their partnerships with mergers, one partner shuttering its operations or the smaller paper dramatically curtailing operations.

Bitterly contested in court when it was first proposed in 1986, the Detroit joint operating agreement remains a subject of debate over whether it was a success, although its primary stated goal – preserving two editorial voices – was fulfilled.

"Ultimately, what it intended to do was to keep two papers in Detroit," said the Poynter Institute's Kelly McBride, who advises news organizations on best practices. "So yeah, I guess that means it was successful. Clearly, I don't think Detroit would have two papers now if the (joint operating agreement) had not existed."

But McBride and former editors of both papers said it's difficult to separate the role of business partnerships in the survival or death of newspapers compared to the existential loss of funding widely blamed on digital advertising.

"It's been a really tough environment for newspapers," Hutton said. "And they have gone to online-only in a lot of places. Many have just gone away. So it's not far-fetched to think it would have been tough to continue to have two nameplates in this particular area, and I think the JOA probably did keep two nameplates alive. But again, it's hard to know."

Ed Wendover, a former Plymouth newspaper publisher who fought the Detroit papers' partnership in court, said the outlets survived in spite of their agreement. Free to compete on all levels without being tethered financially, the papers "would be stronger than they are today and have more circulation," Wendover said.

Silverman expressed a similar sentiment, saying that "the business aspect of the JOA was a hindrance to both newspapers."

"The positive was that it kept two newspapers going," he said. "The negative was that the business staff tried to serve too many masters and didn't serve either very well."

In the years before the joint operating agreement, The News and the Free Press were locked in a financially draining, "old-fashioned, intense newspaper war," said The News' editorial page editor Nolan Finley, who at the time worked as an editor on the paper's city desk.

The News – then owned by Gannett (recently renamed USA TODAY Co.) – and the Free Press – then owned by now-defunct Knight Ridder – in 1986 filed for federal approval to merge business operations in a 100-year partnership, leaving separately owned and competitive newsrooms.

Wendover, the former Plymouth publisher, led opposition to the partnership and sued to block it. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled 4-4 on the case, allowing the agreement to take effect in 1989. The pact was renegotiated as a 20-year deal in 2005 when newspaper ownership changed; Gannett bought the Free Press and sold The News to MediaNews Group.

"I remember that when it came about, it was a matter of survival," said U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Ann Arbor. "And I think local media matters. I think it's important that there are two newspapers with different perspectives, and I'm someone that thinks we need more media, not less. People need to be able to go to places where you can really get the facts. And I hope both papers survive."

Although the rise of digital advertising at the expense of newspapers wasn't what prompted the tie-up, former Free Press publisher Dave Hunke said the timing of the agreement was unwittingly prescient.

"The JOA was necessary from an economic standpoint to keep two newspapers in place," Hunke said. "We were within a couple of years heading into the deepest financial crisis this country had seen since the Great Depression, and the business was not good."

The role of journalism and how to pay for it

The papers' upcoming split once again raises questions about the market for two dailies and whether current economics can support both outlets.

"People wanted two fiercely independent competitive newspapers in that town," said Hunke, who became president of the joint business operations when the partnership was reconstituted in 2005. "People wanted their newspapers. And they wanted them competitive, and they wanted them separate."

Throughout the agreement, Detroit maintained its rare status as a two-paper town.

Silverman said both papers served readers well during the JOA.

"The News always had a certain journalistic personality embodied by its name: The News," he said, adding that during his time in Detroit, the Free Press was known as "the friendly Freep."

Both newspapers won Pulitzer Prizes during the partnership and "changed lives in the community," Hutton said. She cited coverage of former Detroit mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, who was convicted 12 years ago of federal racketeering and tax evasion charges after being accused of running a criminal enterprise out of City Hall, rigging bids and pocketing more than $840,000 in bribes and kickbacks.

"Even though there's a whole political entity out there that likes to trash it and say that journalism is harmful and anti-American, it's quite the opposite," she said. "If you think about it, journalism is about preserving the ideals and making sure that people know what's happening because it's our money, and it's our government, and it's our right, and it's supposed to be our decision. And it's just not possible for the average person to oversee what's happening in the world the way journalists should be overseeing it for them."

Hutton said the success of the papers "all comes down to: What do the advertisers think?"

"You got to unlock the business solution, somehow," Hunke said. "But you cannot take the shortcuts on the news side. Good journalism, in the end, I swear it will win. I just wish somebody could find a way to unlock the economics."

People are getting their news from AI – and it's altering their views

By ADRIAN KUENZLER
Scholar-in-Residence, University of Denver; University of Hong Kong (The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Meta's decision to end its professional fact-checking program sparked a wave of criticism in the tech and media world. Critics warned that dropping expert oversight could erode trust and reliability in the digital information landscape, especially when profit-driven platforms are mostly left to police themselves.

What much of this debate has overlooked, however, is that today, AI large language models are increasingly used to write up news summaries, headlines and content that catch your attention long before traditional content moderation mechanisms can step in. The issue isn't clear-cut cases of misinformation or harmful subject matter going unflagged in the absence of content moderation. What's missing from the discussion is how ostensibly accurate information is selected, framed and emphasized in ways that can shape public perception.

Large language models gradually influence the way people form opinions by generating the information that chatbots and virtual assistants present to people over time. These models are now also being built into news sites, social media platforms and search services, making them the primary gateway to obtain information.

Studies show that large language models do more than simply pass along information. Their responses can subtly highlight certain viewpoints while minimizing others, often without users realizing it.

Communication bias

My colleague, computer scientist Stefan Schmid, and I, a technology law and policy scholar, show in a forthcoming accepted paper in the journal Communications of the ACM that large language models exhibit communication bias. We found that they may have a tendency to highlight particular perspectives while omitting or diminishing others. Such bias can influence how users think or feel, regardless of whether the information presented is true or false.

Empirical research over the past few years has produced benchmark datasets that correlate model outputs with party positions before and during elections. They reveal variations in how current large language models deal with public content. Depending on the persona or context used in prompting large language models, current models subtly tilt toward particular positions – even when factual accuracy remains intact.

These shifts point to an emerging form of persona-based steerability – a model's tendency to align its tone and emphasis with the perceived expectations of the user. For instance, when a user describes themselves as an environmental activist and another as a business owner, a model may answer the same question about a new climate law by emphasizing different, yet factually accurate, concerns for each of them. For example, the criticisms could be that the law does not go far enough in promoting environmental benefits and that the law imposes regulatory burdens and compliance costs.

Such alignment can easily be misread as flattery. The phenomenon is called sycophancy: Models effectively tell users what they want to hear. But while sycophancy is a symptom of user-model interaction, communication bias runs deeper. It reflects disparities in who designs and builds these systems, what datasets they draw from and which incentives drive their refinement. When a handful of developers dominate the large language model market and their systems consistently present some viewpoints more favorably than others, small differences in model behavior can scale into significant distortions in public communication.

What regulation can and can't do

Modern society increasingly relies on large language models as the primary interface between people and information. Governments worldwide have launched policies to address concerns over AI bias. For instance, the European Union's AI Act and the Digital Services Act attempt to impose transparency and accountability. But neither is designed to address the nuanced issue of communication bias in AI outputs.

Proponents of AI regulaçtion often cite neutral AI as a goal, but true neutrality is often unattainable. AI systems reflect the biases embedded in their data, training and design, and attempts to regulate such bias often end up trading one flavor of bias for another.

And communication bias is not just about accuracy – it is about content generation and framing. Imagine asking an AI system a question about a contentious piece of legislation. The model's answer is not only shaped by facts, but also by how those facts are presented, which sources are highlighted and the tone and viewpoint it adopts.

This means that the root of the bias problem is not merely in addressing biased training data or skewed outputs, but in the market structures that shape technology design in the first place. When only a few large language models have access to information, the risk of communication bias grows. Apart from regulation, then, effective bias mitigation requires safeguarding competition, user-driven accountability and regulatory openness to different ways of building and offering large language models.

Most regulations so far aim at banning harmful outputs after the technology's deployment, or forcing companies to run audits before launch. Our analysis shows that while prelaunch checks and post-deployment oversight may catch the most glaring errors, they may be less effective at addressing subtle communication bias that emerges through user interactions.

Beyond AI regulation

It is tempting to expect that regulation can eliminate all biases in AI systems. In some instances, these policies can be helpful, but they tend to fail to address a deeper issue: the incentives that determine the technologies that communicate information to the public.

Our findings clarify that a more lasting solution lies in fostering competition, transparency and meaningful user participation, enabling consumers to play an active role in how companies design, test and deploy large language models.

The reason these policies are important is that, ultimately, AI will not only influence the information we seek and the daily news we read, but it will also play a crucial part in shaping the kind of society we envision for the future.

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Without pennies, should retailers round up or down? States offer their 2 cents

By KEVIN HARDY
Stateline.org (TNS)

As pennies vanish from the American landscape, many businesses are clamoring for federal guidance on how to handle cash transactions in a penniless world.

Should retailers round up or down? Should they round in favor of the customer? Or in favor of the business?

So far, calls for federal direction have gone unanswered. Some businesses are setting their own policies, but states are now beginning to act amid growing uncertainty.

While the question revolves around only a few cents per transaction, it does raise important consumer protection and legal questions for states to consider. Retailers must weigh threats of potential lawsuits, while policymakers worry about protecting the most vulnerable consumers who rely on cash for everyday purchases.

President Donald Trump in February moved to eliminate the penny from U.S. pocketbooks, citing the high cost of minting them – about 3.7 cents per penny. But even before the coin's final production run last month, U.S. retailers and banks were reporting widespread penny shortages.

To provide clarity, lawmakers in New York have proposed legislation mirroring Canada's rounding standard – up or down to the nearest five cents. And officials in Georgia and Utah have issued nonbinding guidance to businesses.

"States do not have the luxury of waiting for the federal government," said Katherine Tschopp, senior associate at government relations firm MultiState.

Complicating the issue are the growing number of jurisdictions requiring businesses to accept cash – a move aimed at protecting vulnerable consumers who may not have access to credit cards or electronic payment systems.

In November, New York became the ninth state to add such a rule, according to tracking from MultiState. At least eight major cities also require businesses to accept cash.

A bipartisan group of federal lawmakers have proposed legislation in the U.S. House and Senate to require all cash transactions be rounded to the nearest five cents, but neither proposal has made it to a floor vote.

The record-breaking federal government shutdown and heated debate on health insurance subsidies have sidelined the penny discussion, Tschopp said. She thinks the federal government will likely determine a national rounding policy – eventually. But in the meantime, she expects more states to weigh in.

New York Democratic Assemblymember John T. McDonald III said he agreed with Trump's move to phase out the costly production of the penny. But businesses are asking for some kind of guidance now, he said.

"In the absence of federal action, I think it's important that the states act to provide clarity – clarity for everybody: clarity for the consumer, as well as the merchant and the state," McDonald told Stateline.

Approaches to rounding

McDonald's proposed legislation mirrors Canada's rounding policy following the 2012 elimination of its one-cent coin. His bill calls for so-called symmetrical rounding of after-tax cash purchases to the nearest five-cent mark. Purchases ending with one, two, six or seven cents would be rounded down. And purchases ending in three, four, eight or nine cents would be rounded up.

So, a consumer would get no cash back from a $1.99 purchase. But a retailer would hand over a nickel to someone spending $1.97.

McDonald sits on the National Conference of State Legislature's State and Local Taxation Task Force that has been examining the penny issue. That task force has recommended symmetrical rounding as the fairest method for merchants and consumers.

McDonald noted that the NCSL group reached a bipartisan consensus on the issue. And he said he's found no opposition from New York businesses or consumer groups on his bill.

"In this day and age where we seem to have a lot of fractious conversations on other issues, it'd be nice to find something that actually we can all agree on," he said. "And to have it start with the good old little penny would be a good spot."

On Wednesday, South Dakota Republican state Sen. Tim Reed urged state lawmakers to start communicating with agencies, retailers and the public over the issue.

A co-chair of the NCSL task force, he said businesses need guidance and consumers may need reassurance. While he acknowledged concerns about "strategic pricing" – in which retailers set prices to push rounding to their advantage – the group's report characterized that as a " limited risk."

"Everybody's thinking, 'Oh, I'll get overcharged, or I'll get undercharged,'" Reed said at an NCSL virtual event about the penny. He said it would be good for people to know that "really this is all going to kind of wash out in the end."

New York Democratic state Sen. James Sanders Jr. said the cash acceptance law he sponsored earlier this year ensures people without access to smartphones or banking are not excluded from commerce. That law also says customers paying with cash cannot be charged more than other buyers.

"Otherwise, you absolutely have a two-tiered system," he said, noting that cash is "a lifeline" for working families, older adults, immigrants and small businesses.

Sanders said he would prefer for retailers to round down to the nearest nickel on cash transactions to protect consumers.

"For the large corporations, this could be a difference of hundreds of thousands of dollars if they are steadily rounding up," he said. While each rounding transaction represents a loss or gain of only a few cents, Sanders said, "multiply that by tens of thousands of people, and you've effectively raised the price of your product without any type of sanction."

Sanders said he plans to introduce legislation on the matter soon, but added that he remains open to McDonald's current proposal of symmetrical rounding. More than anything, he said, businesses desire some kind of guidance.

"We're not trying to cheat business. We're just trying not to be cheated by business," he said. "The people I've been speaking to are honest souls, and they just want to know the right thing to do in a penniless society."

A rapid change

The U.S. Mint in Philadelphia struck the last penny on Nov. 12, but pennies were already scarce at that time.

By mid-November, more than 100 of the government's 165 coin distribution sites across the country were without pennies, according to the Retail Industry Leaders Association, which represents major chains including CVS, Target and 7-Eleven.

In a November survey of its members, that organization found six national chains had more than 1,000 stores that had no pennies.

The association said most of its survey respondents were rounding cash transactions to the benefit of customers – always down to the nearest five cents. While it's fair for shoppers, it's "costing businesses millions of dollars as small amounts add up across thousands of daily cash transactions."

While states weigh the issue, the association is pushing for a federal answer.

"We are urging the federal government to quickly address the problem, to allow for uniform adjustments by retailers that operate in a multitude of states," Austen Jensen, the organization's senior executive vice president of public affairs, said in a statement to Stateline.

Other groups, including the American Bankers Association, have also pushed for federal action.

"They're obviously concerned about it and wanting a federal fix," said Christopher Phillips, a partner at law firm Holland & Knight. "The government fairly abruptly decided they weren't going to mint any more pennies and these shortages of pennies spread fairly quickly across the country."

For retailers, the problem is both practical and legal, said Phillips, who represents payment system companies and financial technology firms.

In many of the jurisdictions that require merchants to accept cash, the laws explicitly forbid charging cash customers more – and have a per-transaction fine for violations, raising the possibility of big fees. And Phillips said merchants could face class-action lawsuits for rounding policies in which plaintiffs argue they are charged more than advertised or face unfair or deceptive business practices.

Federal regulations also ban retailers from charging more for purchases made with food stamps, through the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP. Cash rounding policies complicate that rule, as some customers would be charged less for certain cash purchases than those using SNAP cards.

"The unintended consequences of these administrative actions, and these laws and how they flow together to create real problems that were certainly never envisioned," Phillips said.

So far, merchants have come up with their own policies.

Because of the penny shortage, the East Coast convenience store chain Sheetz asked customers to move to cashless payments or round up to support charitable causes. It even offered free beverages for those willing to cash in 100 pennies.

Kwik Trip, which operates convenience stores across the Midwest, in October announced its registers would automatically round down cash transactions to the nearest nickel in favor of customers.

But without a federal standard, the landscape is patchy, Phillips said. Rounding creates a winner and a loser in each cash transaction. Some companies have pushed to standardize their practice across the country, but others will only choose to round down if required.

"Others are like, 'You know what? This is actual money for us,'" he said. "'We're not just going to give it up for the sake of convenience.'"

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org. Stateline is part of States Newsroom, a national nonprofit news organization focused on state policy.

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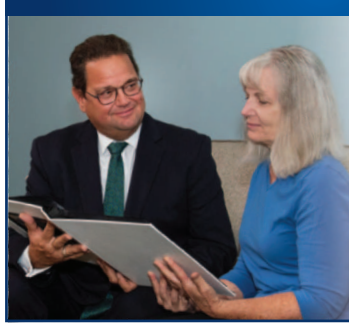
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COMMENTARY

Zoom Dosso / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

This photo taken on July 20, 2015 shows the entrance to the Elwa clinic, an ebola treatment center in Monrovia.

Hamstringing the humanities will hinder scientific discovery

By SHADI BARTSCH
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

It seems we've decided the humanities have less to give the human race – or more modestly, this country's future – than the sciences.

This is a serious mistake. The sciences and the humanities are different faces of the human search for knowledge and not the opposites we have turned them into. If you hamstring one, you hamstring the other. And thinking of "sciences" and "humanities" as unrelated modes of inquiry is not only shortsighted; it's also new to western civilization. Before the scientific revolution, investigations into the natural world and into the human condition were treated as different facets of our quest to know – a drive that Aristotle defined, in his "Metaphysics," as characteristic of humankind by nature. But when we started treating science (and the technologies it birthed) as independent of other forms of knowledge, when we started treating meaning, history, culture and power as externalities, it cost us in discovery, in deployment and in avoidable harm.

There are so very many examples. Take eugenics, a canonical instance of what happens when measurement and quantification are treated as synonymous with truth, and a core humanistic question – "what is this category, historically and morally?" – is waved away. Eugenics, advanced as a scientific program, carried normative assumptions about "fitness" and hierarchy into policies that ranged from coercive sterilization to state violence. The humanities could have pointed at the time to the conceptual instability of race as a biological essence; the rhetorical sleight of hand by which social prejudice becomes "data"; the political uses of supposedly neutral expertise.

Or consider health and medicine. Again and again, epidemics have demonstrated that pathogens move through cultures, not just bodies. Anthropological and historical work on trust, rumor, religion, political legitimacy and the social meaning of risk has repeatedly improved the design of interventions, because it reveals why a technically sound policy can fail spectacularly when it ignores how people understand authority. "Follow the science" is not a plan if you do not also know how communities hear it, fear it, or translate it into local idioms of danger and care.

And artificial intelligence! We built machines that can translate, classify, predict and persuade at planetary scale, and only after doing so – after releasing them into the bloodstream of public life – did we remember to ask the questions that every decent civilization has always asked first: Who gets harmed? Who gets counted? What gets erased? We are shocked that algorithmic systems trained on historical data reproduce historical injustice; that predictive tools in policing and credit can harden inequities into automated fate; that facial recognition can perform unevenly across populations; that "optimization" can become an alibi for ethics.

But none of this should be surprising if we remember the 19th-century pattern: Build a technical instrument, declare it objective and then discover that it has quietly inherited the world's prejudices because it was trained on the world as it is.

The success stories are there. During the 2014-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, anthropological insights – burial practices, trust networks, local authority structures and rumor ecology – proved crucial to designing interventions people would accept and that would work on the ground. The literature is explicit that community engagement and social understanding were not optional "cultural add-ons" but part of effective outbreak control.

Where science and the humanities are severed, the damage often takes one of three forms: category error (we measured the wrong thing, because we never interrogated the category); trust collapse (people refused the intervention, because science treated social meaning as noise); and delayed correction (harm had to become undeniable before the system could "see" it).

Where humanistic angles were allowed in, science tended to improve not by becoming less rigorous, but by becoming more self-aware: clearer about its concepts, its subjects, its incentives and its downstream effects.

The bitter irony is that we are now at a moment when universities, under financial and political pressure, are shrinking the very disciplines that could have helped us avoid such pitfalls: philosophy and ethics (where we learn to argue about ends), history (where we learn what "progress" has cost before), literature and rhetoric (where we learn how language makes realities) and the interpretive social sciences (where we learn how institutions distribute trust and harm). We say these are worthless expenses for society. Could we be more wrong?

This is not just about technology's impact on the psyche? Science's questions arise out of a future we envision for ourselves: Who does the envisioning?

It is hard to think of a worse time for humanities retrenchment. The sciences are extraordinary at generating data, but they cannot on their own generate the habits of mind that allow societies to interpret data responsibly or resist the distortions that often engulf it. Nor, as currently practiced, do they allow us to see how the world of the humanities is constantly contributing to scientific advance. Lop off the humanities, and we'll all pay the price for this silly miscalculation of human interest.

Shadi Bartsch is a professor in humanities at the University of Chicago and former director of the Institute on the Formation of Knowledge. Visit Chicago Tribune at chicagotribune.com.

Revived local DeMolay chapter is growing and thriving

Dear Editor,

There is a "new" organization and fun activity for young men in southwest Michigan – DeMolay! DeMolay was popular in Coloma almost 50 years ago, but like many activities it gradually died out as society changed after the 1970s. However, our revived Southwest Gold Coast Chapter of DeMolay International is growing and thriving. In November we doubled our size.

Parents, grandparents, and guardians looking to improve and enrich the life of their young man should consider DeMolay. It stresses and teaches what many consider "old time" values which are the key virtues of DeMolay – family, patriotism, courtesy, comradeship, fidelity, respect and reverence, and cleanness of living.

DeMolays plan and organize their own activities and events and lead their Chapter under the supervision of adult Advisors who must pass a rigorous Youth Safety training program and criminal background check.

DeMolay is open to any young man 12 to 21 years of age with the only requirement being that he believes in a deity. DeMolay favors no specific religion and is not sponsored by any religious organization. It stresses high moral and spiritual values, ethical behavior, leadership and character development and will not tolerate bullying, unsportsmanlike conduct, or other behaviors which might hurt its members.

For younger boys, 9 through 11, DeMolay offers what is called Squires. Squires can enjoy most DeMolay activities. Because we recognize the differences in age and maturity, we let them lead their own Manors while the DeMolays lead their own Chapters.

SWGC DeMolay is actively seeking members in the southwest Michigan area. We are well funded and able to provide many unique experiences for our members. Parents and others concerned or worried about the dangers of social media, teen loneliness and other societal issues affecting young men should contact us about this great alternative activity.

Email "Dad" Matt Moser, Chapter Chairman, at demolay.swgc.coloma@gmail.com or call or text at 269-921-6892.

Matt Moser
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Fifth Grade	1	Twelfth Grade	None
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Applications are available and being accepted electronically, January 5-16, 2026, at www.edwardsburgpublicschools.org for any Y5/Kindergarten - 12th grade student living in Cass County and contiguous districts in Berrien, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Please complete a separate application for each student. For more information, contact Kimberly Slack at 269-663-3055 or kslack@goeddies.com. Additional spots will be considered as they become available.

Beckwith to host auditions for 'The Unexpected Guest'

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — The Beckwith Theatre Company will soon be holding auditions for its upcoming production of "The Unexpected Guest" by Agatha Christie.

Directed by Jack Gannon, auditions will take place from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 11 and from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 12 at the Beckwith Theatre, 100 New York Ave, Dowagiac.

Production dates are April 17-19 and 24-26. Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script.

Play description:

"On a foggy night, Michael Starkwedder enters the home of the Warwick's through a window in the study. He finds the dead body of Richard Warwick, and finds Richard's wife, Laura, holding a gun that supposedly killed him. Michael does not believe she killed him, and she soon tells him she is innocent.

"Believing her story of self-defense, Starkwedder helps cover up the crime, but the investigation reveals a web of secrets, deceit, and a shocking final twist where the killer is revealed to be someone close."

Roles to be auditioned include:

■ Richard Warwick – The murdered man, owner of the manor. Written to be in his forties through sixties.

■ Laura Warwick – Richard's Wife, who confesses to the murder. Written to be in her thirties or forties.

■ Michael Starkwedder – The "unexpected guest" who stumbles upon the scene and offers an alibi. Written to be in his thirties through fifties.

■ Jan Warwick – An excitable young member of the family. Written to be in her twenties or thirties.

■ Miss Bennett – The organized housekeeper. Written to be in her thirties through sixties.

■ Henry Angell – The family's shifty manservant. Written to be in her thirties through sixties.

■ Inspector Thomas – A police inspector. Written to be in her forties through sixties.

■ Sergeant Cadwallader – A police investigator. Written to be in her twenties through forties.

■ Julian Farrer – A politician with ties to the family. Written to be in her thirties through forty-five.

Berrien Springs police chief to retire in March

Toliver to exit in March, teach at police academy

By DEBRA HAIGHT
HP Correspondent

BERRIEN SPRINGS — Next year will bring changes to the Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township Police Department, as current Police Chief Paul Toliver has announced his retirement.

His last day as chief will be March 31, 2026.

"Serving our community and leading the men and women of this department has been a great privilege both professionally and personally," he wrote in his retirement letter. "The Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township Police Department has faced challenges while making achievements and upholding the integrity and accountability necessary to be a great agency our community can be proud of."

Toliver said he wanted to extend his deepest gratitude to the Oronoko Township board, the officers and the community for their trust over the last decade.

"The quality of our officers gives me confidence in our department's continued success and its commitment to public safety," he said.

As he gets ready to retire, Toliver said he's looking forward to spending more time with his family who have supported him throughout his career and pursuing personal interests while continuing to support the local community.

Toliver said he plans to teach at the Lake Michigan College Police Academy and continue giving back to the job in any other ways he is able to do. He said he hasn't made a formal decision on whether to run for reelection to the Berrien Springs school board this November. He has served on that board since 2007.

"While I still have a passion for the job, I view myself as part of a 'continuum' in the law enforcement community," he said. "The success of law enforcement in Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township and Berrien County in general far outweighs any individual accolades.

"Our relationship with other Berrien County law enforcement agencies is very strong," he added. "Most of all, I appreciate the men and women I have had the honor of working with for the past 37 years. Law enforcement is a 'calling' and the support from these people I have received has been beyond measure."

Toliver's long career in law enforcement has included more than 25 years with the Berrien County Sheriff's Department and the last 10 years with Berrien Springs. During his tenure with the sheriff's department, he rose from being a deputy to the ranks of sergeant, lieutenant and captain.

At Berrien Springs, he has performed administrative, managerial and supervisory duties and overseen a $1.4 million budget. He has assisted with contract negotiations with the Fraternal Order of Police and worked to continually develop community, school and church relationships.

Toliver is a native of Hart, Mich., and attended Hope College and Muskegon Community College before getting his bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Michigan State University.

His community activities have included being a member of the Berrien Springs school board since 2007 and the board president from 2018 to 2025. He is also a member of the Berrien Springs/Eau Claire Rotary Club and is a past coach with the Berrien Springs schools and the Berrien Springs Recreational Department.

As for the search for his successor, Oronoko Township Supervisor Mike Hildebrand said the position will be posted in January with the goal of interviewing candidates in February. He said the goal is to have someone in place and ready to go by April 1.

Beachside Salt & Soul to offer wellness services to Bridgman

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
For Leader Publications

BRIDGMAN — Downtown Bridgman will soon offer a relaxing suite of wellness services with the opening of Beachside Salt & Soul.

Sarah Buist has been working as a full time massage therapist for nearly seven years and is bringing her expertise to her new business opening in downtown Bridgman in the former location of Lazy Ballerina Winery at 4209 Lake St.

The new location, which she hopes to open in January, will feature an expansion beyond massage to a Himalayan salt room and a retail outlet for a variety of products.

The retail space will feature related items, such as salt scrubs, lotions and body butters, but Buist also plans to expand into gift items, including handmade products by local artists, including paintings and clay pieces by Lorri Hildebrandt. She also hopes to offer hats, t-shirts, and other items featuring Michigan, the city of Bridgman, and the beach. She also plans to stock supplies for visiting beachgoers and campers.

"I think the beach is probably the most special place," said Buist.

Buist is a lifelong resident of the area and wanted to join in the growth of the tight-knit community and the expanding downtown. Beachside will be a part of the local social district and will open with a ribbon-cutting in collaboration with the The Greater Bridgman Area Chamber of Commerce and Growth Alliance.

Though her current focus is opening the doors on the Lake Street location, Buist is already thinking ahead to the future. She hopes to eventually add a second salt room that includes an infrared sauna and has considered several other related services. Her daughter, a cosmetologist, may bring in her expertise to create a "beach wedding day experience" for bridal wedding preparation.

"It can be a whole experience for a bride and the party, especially for someone who is going to be getting married at Weko Beach," she said.

Buist's goal is to merge her love of Bridgman and the beach with her background in professional wellness to create a unique experience for local residents and visitors alike.

SENTENCES

From page A1

restitution. He has credit for 78 days already served.

The incident occurred May 30 at the Niles Rural King in Niles Township. He was sentenced for another theft charge in October also at the Niles Rural King and received a 300 day jail sentence. The two sentences will run concurrently.

Thomas said he took full responsibility for his actions. "I take full responsibility for my wrongdoings," he said. "I'm in the process of rehabilitating myself. I'm taking courses to get my GED. I don't want see myself in any more courtrooms."

Jesse Burgess Webster, 35, of Niles, pleaded guilty to resisting and obstructing police and use of methamphetamine and was sentenced to 180 days in jail with credit for 55 days served and $248 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Nov. 5 in Niles.

"I find the sentencing recommendation to be appropriate and proportionate based on your criminal history and the fact you put the officers in a dangerous situation," Judge Hosbein said. "You have trust in other people."

In other sentencings:

Korey Larry Collier, 22, of Chicago, pleaded guilty to uttering and publishing-counterfeit notes and was sentenced to credit for three days served and $358 in fines, costs and restitution. The incident occurred Jan. 18, 2024 at the Niles Wings, Etc. in Niles Township.

Brandy Rashonda Haulcomb, 49, of Niles, pleaded guilty to resisting and obstructing police and was sentenced to two years probation in Mental Health Court, credit for 139 days served and $1,498 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Aug. 13 in Niles.

Jacob Leo Prawat, 52, of New Carlisle, pleaded guilty to use of meth second offense and was sentenced to credit for three days served and $258 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Feb. 14 in Niles Township.

GRANTS

From page A1

Library, Berrien Artist Guild, Inc., Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Southwest Michigan, Bridgman Public Schools, Corewell Health Foundation – Southwest Michigan, Curious Kids' Museum, Disability Network Southwest Michigan, EliStrong Foundation, Girl Scouts – Heart of Michigan, Greater Bridgman Area Chamber of Commerce and Growth Alliance, Grounded Incorporated, Harbor Country Rotary Foundation, InterCare Community Health Network, Junior Achievement of the Michigan Great Lakes, Krasl Art Center, Lake Michigan College, Neighbor by Neighbor,Paws of Hope, St. Augustine of Canterbury Episcopal Church, St. Joseph Today, School of American Music, Stevensville United Methodist Church and the Region of Three Oaks Museum.

Applications for the next round For Good Grants are due March 1, 2026.

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Bid Opening immediately following
Appraised Value – $1.2M
Any questions, contact Lynn Vanderbos DMVA, Lansing, MI at (517) 481-7563, 7am – 3pm, M-F

Sports

These numbers define the Lions' shortcomings
Page B2

Got results?
max.harden@leaderpub.com

The Brandywine girls basketball team defeated Kent State 60-42 Tuesday, Dec. 30.

Nick Shelton / For Leader Publications

Brandywine girls beat Kent City

By SCOTT HASSINGER
For Leader Publications

KALAMAZOO — A pair of unbeaten, state-ranked and perennial power prep girls' basketball teams in Niles Brandywine and Kent City met Tuesday night inside of Anderson Athletic Center at Kalamazoo College.

When the final buzzer had" sounded it was Niles Brandywine walking away with a decisive 60-42 non-conference victory.

"This was an excellent team win over a very experienced and talented Kent City squad. I'm proud of our girls for committing to getting better over the Christmas break and their preparation for this game. Defense wins championships and our young team is really starting to buy in at that end of the floor," said Niles Brandywine's veteran head coach Josh Hood.

Niles Brandywine remains unbeaten on the season at 5-0, while Kent City, members of the Central State Activities Association's White Division, falls to 4-1 after the loss.

A flu bug hit Brandywine's squad prompting Hood to canceled Monday's scheduled practice. The Lady Bobcats were not at full strength in Tuesday's contest, but the available players responded in a big way.

Brandywine jumped out to a 18-9 advantage after the opening eight minutes thanks to thanks to four points each from freshman guard Zaya Price, Karleigh Byrd and Lily Gill, along with a key three pointer from Makenna Price.

The Lady Bobcats then duplicated its offensive production with another 18-point effort during the second quarter to extend its advantage to 36-16 entering halftime. Mackenna Price had seven points, Byrd six and Gill four during that stanza.

But it was the Lady Bobcats' intensity and pressure at the defensive end of the floor that gave them all the momentum heading into halftime by holding the Eagles to single-digits in each of the first two periods.

Kent City managed to outscore Brandywine 13-9 during the third quarter to pull within 45-29 entering the fourth quarter.

Brandywine went to the outside during the final eight minutes with Gill and Byrd netting a pair if triples each and Zaya Price netted three points herself to help the Lady Bobcats outscore the Eagles 15-13 and put the contest away.

Gill finished the night as the game's leading scorer with 20 points, while Byrd finished with 17 and Mackenna Price netted 14. Zaya Price added eight and Macy Pellow scored one point.

The Lady Bobcats finished with 24 field-goals, including six triples, and made 6-of-9 free-throw attempts.

Kent City was led in scoring by Kensington Freeland with 10 points, Brooklyn Harding added nine, Layne Hoffman eight and Ellie Hansen finished with seven.

The Eagles made 14 field goals, including six triples, and made 8-of-9 free-throw attempts.

FOOTBALL

Whittingham lays out his priorities at Michigan

'Physicality' will be Wolverines calling card

By ANGELIQUE S. CHENGELIS
The Detroit News (TNS)

New Michigan head coach Kyle Whittingham said physicality will be his team's "calling card" and listed his current priority as roster retention with the opening of the transfer portal looming – he spent nearly an hour with quarterback Bryce Underwood before the press conference – and hiring a staff.

Whittingham was formally introduced as Michigan's 22nd head coach on Sunday at the Hyatt Regency, where the team is staying as it prepares for the Citrus Bowl on Wednesday. Whittingham, who earlier this month stepped down after 21 seasons as Utah's head coach, was hired on Friday with a five-year deal through the 2030 season. He went 177-88 with the Utes.

"What can you expect? Physicality will be our calling card," Whittingham said. "We were the most physical team in whatever league we played in. I believe in running the football and defending the run."

Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel after the press conference said he had a long list of candidates to replace former head coach Sherrone Moore, fired on Dec. 10 for having an inappropriate relationship with a staff member, but Whittingham was always a priority.

"He was on our radar from Day 1," Manuel said. "We were zeroing in on him a week or so into (the search), and then it became clear he had interest in us."

Whittingham hit all the right notes, stressing the current players, calling Michigan a "top-five program" nationally and detailing how he has appreciated Michigan since he was a kid.

"I think our team will fall right in line with what Michigan is used to," Whittingham said. "All the way back to Coach (Bo) Schembechler, who, by the way, when I was 7 years old, sitting in my living room watching a football game by myself, and it just happened to be Michigan versus Ohio State. I saw those winged helmets coming out of the tunnel and Bo Schembechler playing against Woody Hayes, and I was hooked. That's the honest truth.

"So I've been watching Michigan football and following it for years. But what you can expect, physicality will be our calling card. If you win the line of scrimmage and are physical upfront, you've always got a chance. So that will be the trademark, and the identity of this football team is physicality, toughness and grit."

See **WHITTINGHAM**, page B2

TNS photo / Dustin Markland, Getty Images

Kyle Whittingham speaks at a news conference introducing him as the new Michigan Wolverines head football coach at the Hyatt Regency Orlando on Dec. 28, 2025, in Orlando, Florida.

Michigan will hire Jason Beck as OC, Jay Hill as DC

By ANGELIQUE S. CHENGELIS
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — New Michigan head coach Kyle Whittingham's staff is starting to take shape, and he has his coordinators in place.

Jason Beck, 45, who was Whittingham's offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach at Utah, is joining him at Michigan as offensive coordinator. Whittingham confirmed the hire Thursday during an interview on ESPN's GameDay. Whittingham, who spent the last 21 seasons as Utah's head coach, was officially introduced as Michigan's head coach Sunday. And Jay Hill, most recently BYU's defensive coordinator, will be Michigan's defensive coordinator, multiple national outlets reported Thursday.

"That's huge for us," Whittingham said of Beck's hiring during the GameDay segment. "Jason did such a great job for us this past season. He's a guy that moves the football and scores points everywhere he's been and it's gonna be a big plus for us having him there in Ann Arbor, as well as a bunch of the other guys that were on the staff on Utah are going to come with him."

See **STAFF**, page B2

FREEMAN

Freeman to remain at Notre Dame after restructured deal

PMG STAFF

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Marcus Freeman is staying in South Bend.

The Notre Dame head football coach wrote, "2026... run it back" on his personal social media account Monday, signaling his return to the Fighting Irish following interest from NFL teams.

The school confirmed on Monday Freeman's contract has been restructured and according to SI.com, his contract has been extended one year through the 2031 season.

Freeman, 39, sports a 43-12 record as head coach and led the Irish to a national championship appearance in the 2024 season. This year, he led the Irish to a 10-2 record, with the team reeling off 10 consecutive wins after an 0-2 start.

These numbers define the Lions' 2025 shortcomings

By RICHARD SILVA
The Detroit News (TNS)

You can point to any number of reasons as an explanation, but everyone who watched can agree on one thing: The 2025 Detroit Lions fell way short of expectations.

The Lions entered 2025 with hopes of winning the Super Bowl. Were they the favorites? No, not after losing two coordinators and an All-Pro center in the offseason. But there was reason for optimism, with 18 offensive and defensive starters returning to the roster following a 15-win campaign the year prior. Run it back, some thought, and the Lions could get over the hump.

Instead, the Lions won't win more than nine games this season, and they're mathematically eliminated from the playoffs before the regular season's final week. There's still a game left to play – a visit to Chicago for a bout with Ben Johnson's Bears awaits – but, at this point, it's nothing more than an exercise in pride.

Here are a few numbers and statistics that define Detroit's underperformance in 2025, as we try to make sense of a lost season.

Time to pressure

Only three teams in the NFL – the Denver Broncos (4.0), Atlanta Falcons (3.3) and Cleveland Browns (3.3) – entered Sunday averaging more sacks per game than the Lions (3.0), who on Christmas brought down Minnesota's Max Brosmer seven times. Four of those sacks against Brosmer came from defensive ends Aidan Hutchinson and Al-Quadin Muhammad. Those two became the first Lions to each finish with 10 or more sacks in the same season since Doug English and William Gay in 1983.

Peel back the onion, though, and you'll reveal some inconsistencies regarding Detroit's pass rush. Firstly, 38 of the Lions' 48 sacks through Week 17 have come in eight games, leaving just 10 for the other half of the season. That included a four-week stretch in November when the Lions produced only four sacks, and one of those came in overtime.

Also to be considered: It's taken the Lions an average of 2.86 seconds to pressure opposing quarterbacks this season, according to Next Gen Stats. That's the fourth-slowest time in the NFL, behind the Chicago Bears (2.89), Cincinnati Bengals (2.88) and Buffalo Bills (2.88). Each of those other teams rank in the bottom half of the league in sacks. The Lions have benefitted from some creative and effective blitzes in 2025 – linebackers Jack Campbell, Derrick Barnes and Alex Anzalone have combined for 11½ sacks – but the defensive line, outside of Hutchinson and Muhammad, didn't perform to the level that 48 sacks would suggest.

Explosive plays

The Lions have allowed 56 completions of at least 20 yards this season, more than anyone not named the Baltimore Ravens (61) or Bengals (57). The secondary has justifiably taken heat for Detroit's struggles in limiting explosive gains – since Week 12, cornerbacks Amik Robertson (445) and D.J. Reed (336) rank last and third-to-last, respectively, in passing yards surrendered while in coverage – but the pass rush also holds plenty of blame.

Opposing targets on passing plays are averaging 2.9 yards of separation against the Lions, the smallest amount in the NFL. Put another way: Detroit's defensive backs have often found themselves in tight coverage, but they haven't been able to finish the play.

Quarterbacks have had an average time to throw of 2.91 seconds against the Lions, third-longest in the NFL. The secondary hasn't played particularly well, but it's not exactly getting torched on down-to-down basis. The problem is the Lions haven't been able to successfully marry their rush and coverage, as Dan Campbell so often harps on being important.

TNS / The Detroit News, Robin Buckson

Detroit Lions quarterback Jared Goff (16) and head coach Dan Campbell talk in the fourth quarter as they take on the Dallas Cowboys at Ford Field in Detroit on Dec. 4, 2025.

Seven duds

Against porous run defenses, the Lions have excelled. Against more stingy units, the Lions have struggled. That's the long and short of it.

The Lions have rushed for fewer than 100 yards in seven games this season, all resulting in a loss. They only had four of those outings (less than 100 rushing yards) in 2023 and 2024 combined, and they haven't had seven in a season since Campbell's first year as head coach, when D'Andre Swift led the team with 617 yards.

Part of the issue is that the Lions could never find the best way to split carries between Jahmyr Gibbs and David Montgomery.

From a standpoint of efficiency, Montgomery had an Expected Points Added (EPA) per rush better than Gibbs in 10 games this season, and his average per carry in those same 10 contests was better, too. That's not to say Montgomery is better than Gibbs (put bluntly, he isn't), but he was at times the better option; in losses this season, Montgomery's EPA/rush (-0.03) and yards/rush (3.6) were higher than Gibbs' marks in both categories (-0.14 and 2.9, respectively).

Ex-MSU coach Dantonio talks Fitzgerald, CFP saga

By TONY PAUL
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — Legendary Michigan State head football Mark Dantonio downplayed his role in the hiring of Pat Fitzgerald, as if to suggest Fitzgerald's move to East Lansing wasn't in the works even before the firing of Jonathan Smith. Smith was fired on a Sunday, and Fitzgerald's hiring was announced the next day.

MSU athletic director J Batt has declined to lay out how a timeline for how the process went down.

In any event, Fitzgerald's hiring certainly had the endorsement of Dantonio. The two spent years going up against each other. The two squared off 11 times when Dantonio was coaching Michigan State and when Fitzgerald was coaching Northwestern, with the Spartans winning six times.

"That was a quick turnaround, so no," Dantonio said, when asked if he had anything to do with the Fitzgerald hiring, in an interview with WJR 760-AM during the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony. "But I've known Pat for 20 years-plus probably. I think he'll be great at Michigan State. First of all, he knows the Midwest, he knows the Big Ten, he knows Chicago, he knows the area. He's an exciting guy, brings a lot of enthusiasm to the game.

"He's got great leadership skills and I think he'll do a tremendous job."

Dantonio was MSU's coach from 2007-19, winning a school-record 114 games and taking the team to 11 bowl games, including the Rose Bowl (a win) and the Cotton Bowl in the College Football Playoff (a loss). Since he retired abruptly after the 2019 season, he has seen the program go into a state of disarray, with the firing of coach Mel Tucker for off-field issues, and then the firing of Smith for on-field issues.

Michigan State won just 14 games from 2022-24, though all have been vacated by the NCAA because of recruiting violations.

The program is hardly recognizable from Dantonio's days – days that earned him a place in the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame as part of the Class of 2025.

"I think it's always about winning," Dantonio, 69, said when asked about MSU needs to do to get its identity back in football. "Three things that Nick used to always talk about, Coach Saban: You've gotta play with great effort, great toughness, and you've gotta know what to do and do it at a fast pace. As long as you can do those things, I think good things are going to happen for you. ... I also believe you've gotta find the inches. Even in this past year, if they can find a couple inches, they're a 7-5 football team probably.

"So you've gotta find those inches and dream big," added Dantonio, who won three Big Ten championships at MSU and beat Michigan eight times in 13 years. "That's what we did every day. We dreamt big."

Fitzgerald was head coach at Northwestern from 2006-22, before his firing ahead of the 2023 season amid a hazing scandal that he eventually sued over and this year finally reached a confidential settlement with the university. Fitzgerald won 110 games during his tenure and made 10 bowl games, winning his last four.

Fitzgerald signed a five-year contract as Michigan State's head football coach.

Dantonio, meanwhile, continues to enjoy retirement. He spends winters down south. He's trying to improve his golf game. He's working on writing a book. And, sure, he still keeps his toes in the game.

Dantonio was a member of this year's CFP committee, a committee that drew serious heat when Notre Dame was left out, and Alabama and Miami made it in. Notre Dame was so incensed it decided against playing in another bowl game, while Alabama and Miami did win their first-round CFP games.

Dantonio said the CFP committee had a near-impossible task, and that no matter, someone would be unhappy.

"There's a lot of discussion and, you know, it's ongoing really throughout the season and you're challenged to try to make the best decision you can based on certain protocols," Dantonio said, including protocols that required five conference champions make it in, which led to the inclusion of Group of Six schools James Madison and Tulane, which both lost their first-round games.

"As you work through it, no, there's not a lot of infighting. There's a lot of discussions, a lot of analytics, you have the opportunity to watch film. The other thing that's important to understand, every week, you re-rank the teams and it's a new ranking. Nobody knows how anybody else is voting, so these votings get tight, then they get discussed. You may vote 10, 12 times until everybody's in agreement.

"Somebody was gonna get left out in the cold. You could see that as things were maturing. So I think that we did what we could do and tried to make the best decision we could."

Asked if there should be CFP expansion, Dantonio said, "That's for somebody else to make those decisions."

The Michigan Sports Hall of Fame was the most recent big honor for Dantonio in retirement. He was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 2024, and he also entered the MSU Athletics Hall of Fame in 2025.

TNS / Dale G. Young, Detroit News

Mark Dantonio won a school-record 114 games at Michigan State.

He turned Spartans football into a national player during his tenure, and in the process made Michigan State more than just a basketball school – which was welcomed by men's basketball coach Tom Izzo, who is so big a football fan he once floated his own name to be the team's coach (before Dantonio arrived). Izzo was among several Michigan State dignitaries on hand for Dantonio's induction Friday night, including Batt.

Dantonio could see the college athletics landscape changing, though, and he feels like he got out at the right time. He said Friday that during his entire tenure at MSU, he had six players transfer in. These days, it's not unusual for a school to have dozens of transfers on the roster, in this age of the portal and revenue sharing.

"I'm a little taken back," Dantonio said during his interview with WJR at the Hall-of-Fame gala, during a long weekend in Detroit. He also took in MSU basketball's 79-70 victory over Oakland at Little Caesars Arena.

WHITTINGHAM

From page B1

The University of Michigan currently is without a president, and there is an ongoing investigation into Moore and what Manuel described as a "cultural evaluation" of the athletic department. Manuel said he requested that evaluation. Michigan also is on probation for two NCAA investigations.

Despite the turmoil and uncertainty in terms of university leadership, Whittingham said that wasn't a concern of his during the courting process for this job.

"I didn't have any hesitation," Whittingham said. "There's some issues and missteps that are being taken care of, but the key is the players. The players are solid players, rock solid. The players, to their credit, just kept after it. So impressed with that, because there was a lot of distractions, a lot of adversity, I guess you could say, but got no doubt that everything's going to be handled properly. We'll see. I'm not close enough, privy enough to exactly what's going on in the details, but full confidence will come out of this just fine."

Whittingham said before addressing reporters he was running on four hours of sleep. He already met with Underwood for 45 minutes on Sunday and believes there will be a perfect fit with the spread offense he wants to run. Underwood said Saturday before practice he was "actually pretty excited" about Whittingham's hire and said he would have plenty of questions when they met.

"It was a great conversation," Whittingham said. "Special young man. The quarterback has to have that 'it' factor, and Bryce has that 'it' factor. His ceiling is very high, and the offense we're going to bring in here, I think is going to suit him to a T."

Also a priority is lining up a staff. Whittingham said he anticipates some will stay on from the current staff to help facilitate the transition and provide some continuity. Whittingham, who took the Utah head coaching job following Urban Meyer, said he is getting some advice from Meyer. Meyer, of course, coached Michigan's rival Ohio State from 2012-2018 and currently works for Fox Sports Big Noon Kickoff.

"First of all, you've got to bring in guys that you're familiar with and you trust and you've worked with," said Whittingham, who was Utah defensive coordinator for two seasons under Meyer. "I think that's always a starting point. I've had some good resources. Urban Meyer, I don't know if that's a four-letter word in this room or not, but Urban and me are very tight. Got some counsel from him. He's been a few places and the key is to get guys you trust."

He said the key is having some familiarity with the coaches he's targeting.

"(Guys) that do things your way, that know what I expect, what my expectations are," he said. "At the same time, I'm not precluding the chance that we will keep some coaches from the current staff. There's some excellent coaches on the staff right now.

"I'm gonna tell you that, most likely, there will be a few faces that stay on and help bridge that. It's much easier to be in a staff room and meeting and say, 'Hey, I wonder how they do this here?' And if you've got a guy right there that's been there done that, that's a big help. So, I would anticipate of the 10 full-time head coaches, seven or eight new guys and two or three holdovers."

As for his relationship with Meyer, which drew some laughs, Whittingham joked said that might change because of the Michigan-Ohio State rivalry.

"I followed his career and obviously stayed in touch throughout the course of his career, and had great success there," Whittingham said of Meyer. "But now, I'm on the right side of the deal now."

Manuel said UM interim president Domenico Grasso was a major part of the decision-making process for hiring Whittingham and they presented his name to the Regents. Manuel said he is encouraged by the response from Michigan fans to the hire.

"I can show you hundreds of texts that have come through with people who are really excited about Coach Whittingham and what he'll bring to the table," Manuel said. "I've heard from so many of my teammates who said he reminds me of a modern-day Bo. You know, the toughness, the mentality, the way his teams play, the physicality and those kind of things. But then you put that in in the modern day sense of the diversity of his offense and his defensive toughness and the way that they go about it.

"I think our Michigan fans have received this in the way that I hope they would, which is that they are ready to go with Coach Whittingham leading the Wolverines starting in 2026."

STAFF

From page B1

Beck's offense ranked No. 4 nationally averaging 482.9 yards a game, was second in rushing, (266.3) and fifth in scoring, averaging 41.2 points.

Beck was offensive coordinator at New Mexico in 2024 and at Syracuse in 2023 before joining Whittingham's staff at Utah for the 2025 season. He was a quarterback at BYU from 2004-06, has also been a quarterbacks coach at Weber State, BYU, Virginia and Syracuse.

Hill, 50, has deep roots with Whittingham at Utah, joining his staff in 2005 as cornerbacks coach and co-special teams coordinator. After the 2013 season, Hill became the head coach at Weber State and was there until he left for BYU in 2023 to become defensive coordinator and associate head coach. His BYU defense in 2025 ranked 35th overall, allowing an average 332.4 yards a game. BYU ranked 31st in rush defense (122.7), 51st in pass defense (209.7) and 21st in scoring (19.1 points).

During an interview on the Michigan radio broadcast at halftime of the Citrus Bowl on Wednesday, Whittingham said his staff will be close to complete by this weekend. He has retained Michigan running backs coach Tony Alford, who has been with the program the last two seasons, and, according to several national outlets, is adding his brother, Freddie Whittingham, from the Utah staff as tight ends coach, as well as receivers coach Micah Simon, a former BYU receiver. Kyle Whittingham also is reportedly is adding Koy Detmer Jr., a Utah analyst/quarterbacks coach, and offensive line coach Jim Harding, also from Utah.

Harding coached at Troy Athens High School in Michigan from 2005-08, first as defensive coordinator and then head coach. He was an assistant at Wyoming from 2009-13 before going to Utah, where he has coached the offensive line since 2014.

"We should be just about full force by this weekend, might be short one or two," Kyle Whittingham said on the broadcast and added he'd be in Ann Arbor on Friday. "We should be full strength within a week."

Beck replaces Chip Lindsey, who left to become offensive coordinator at Missouri. Michigan's defensive coordinator this past season was Wink Martindale.

Whittingham said it was "an incredible experience" meeting individually with the Michigan players, which he did while in Orlando for the Citrus Bowl.

"These guys, high-character group," Whittingham said. "They care about academics. They want to be at Michigan. And that was the real mission what I was trying to find out from everybody is where they were mentally and what their plans were. I was amazed. There was not a bad guy in the bunch. Every guy I visited with was excited to be at Michigan. Now, that doesn't mean they're all going to stay. They've got the transfer portal (which opens Friday), and I'm sure there's going to be some activity there."

Whittingham said on GameDay that his early focus, aside from assembling his staff and getting the roster in order, is winter conditioning.

"It starts in the weight room," Whittingham said. "Offseason program is critical. You've got to have the right guy running the strength program, which we feel we're going to."

Michigan completed the 2024 season with a 41-27 loss to Texas in the Citrus Bowl to finish 9-4. Whittingham has higher hopes for the program now that he's taken over.

"This is a place that has a national championship opportunity every single year," he said.

MOVIE REVIEW

Vertical Entertainment / TNS

Daisy Ridley's Ava and Brenton Thwaites' Clay embark on a dangerous mission in "We Bury the Dead."

'We Bury the Dead' sees Ridley star in zombie drama with fading pulse

By MARK MESZOROS
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio) (TNS)

'We Bury The Dead'

★★

MPA rating: R (for strong violent content, gore, language and brief drug use)

Running time: 1:35

How to watch: In theaters Jan. 2

The first sentence of the tagline for the new film "We Bury the Dead" reads, "After a catastrophic military disaster, the dead don't just rise – they hunt," its official synopsis going on to use words and phrases including "catastrophic military disaster," "quarantine zone" and "undead."

Yep, this is a zombie movie.

However, no doubt at least in part to what appears to have been a relatively limited budget, this is more of a character study than a thriller based around heart-pounding encounters with hordes of mindless hungry types.

That's understandable.

The problem is that as a character study, writer-director Zak Hilditch's "We Bury the Dead" – in theaters this week – largely spins its post-apocalyptic wheels despite some nice touches and a game effort from star Daisy Ridley.

The "Star Wars" alum portrays Ava Newman, an American living in California with her Australian husband, Mitch (Matt Whelan). After a flashback introducing us to the seemingly happy pair, we find Ava in the Australian island state of Tasmania, where "the pulse" – a U.S. military experiment gone wrong – has killed many.

Ava has traveled there to join the Body Retrieval Unit to search for Mitch, who was in Woodridge, in southern Tasmania, on a work retreat at the time of the disaster. Traveling that far south is forbidden due to inherent dangers, but Ava intends to find a way to reach Mitch, who, with any luck, is alive.

However, while some affected folks have been awakening after the disaster, they're not exactly themselves. If anyone in the BRU encounters any deceased showing signs of activity, Ava and others are told by a military man, soldiers will get to them quickly to put down the rising dead "with the dignity they deserve."

Early on, Ava befriends Clay (Brenton Thwaites of "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales"), a long-haired, foul-mouthed, cigarette-smoking Australian with a far different reason for volunteering for the BRU. She makes a deal with him to take her south on a motorbike they find, which he covets.

They go about their way with only minimal issues – until they encounter Riley (Mark Coles Smith, "Hard Rock Medical"), a soldier who eventually offers to take Ava on the rest of her journey. Seeing the wedding ring on his finger, she chooses to trust him.

Without going into too much detail about Ava's time with Riley, it's safe to say that, as is the case with much zombie-based fare, "We Bury the Dead" traffics in the well-worn idea that humans living among the undead may be the real danger.

Nic Duncan / Vertical Entertainment / TNS

Daisy Ridley stars as a woman searching for her husband after a military disaster in "We Bury the Dead."

To be fair, despite the film's tagline, Hilditch – who, according to the movie's production notes, found inspiration for the tale in his mother's long battle with cancer – tries to do something more soulful with his zombie offering. Through flashbacks, Hilditch ("1922," "These Final Hours") gradually peels away the layers of Ava's relationship with her husband, paying off that bit of the narrative reasonably nicely in the third act.

For too much of "We Bury the Dead," however, Hilditch saddles the viewer with bland dialogue and too few scares. Cinematographer Steve Annis ("I Am Mother") gives the film an appropriately stark look, the sparse but haunting music of composer Chris Clark ("Elysium") lands as it's intended and the sound design of Duncan Campbell ("I Am Mother") really hits home when the undead grind their teeth – it's highly unsettling – but all of that goes only so far.

Ridley ("The Marsh King's Daughter," "Young Woman and the Sea") is left to do a bit more heavy lifting than probably is fair to ask of her. For as promising as she seemed when introduced to the world as Jedi-to-be Rey in 2015's "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," she seems to possess only so high a ceiling and can't find a way to elevate this so-so material.

That said, her time on screen with Smith is, increasingly, edge-of-your-seat stuff, a credit to the actors and Hilditch. Unfortunately, though, that's as compelling as "We Bury the Dead" gets.

MOVIE REVIEW

'The Plague' has first-time feature director delivers disturbing horror

By MARK MESZOROS
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio) (TNS)

'The Plague'

★★★

MPA rating: R (for language, sexual material, self-harm/bloody images, and some drug and alcohol use – all involving children)

Running time: 1:38

How to watch: In theaters

Charlie Polinger achieves a lot with relatively little with his feature directorial debut, "The Plague."

Getting a wide release this week, this slice of psychological horror is quite effective despite its small scale and a cast consisting largely of little-known young actors.

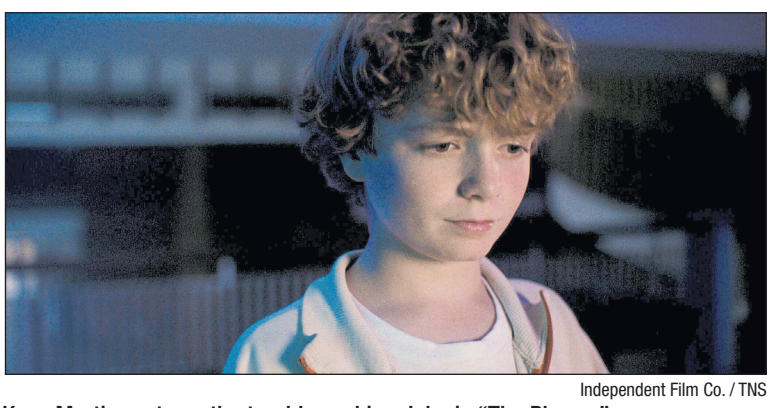
A cross between "Lord of the Flies" and … some other movie set at a youth water polo camp, "The Plague" explores, as Polinger puts it in his directorial statement, "the clumsy liminal space between childhood and adolescence, when the id grows too fast and too strong for the conscience to keep up."

Also the film's writer, Polinger found inspiration for the story when he unearthed old journals from when he was 12. He read his tales of a youth sports camp, where boys told tall tales of a mysterious "plague" that had infected one unfortunate kid – it was the reason for his acne-covered face and was turning his brain to "mush."

That is the situation 12-year-old Ben (Everett Blunck) encounters when he joins the second session of a water polo camp after moving to the area from another city in summer 2003. A bunch of the boys – led by the charismatic Jake (Kayo Martin) – have ostracized another with a skin issue, Eli (Kenny Rasmussen), which they make very clear as they accept Ben into their fold.

"Those aren't regular pimples," Jake tells Ben as they sit on the bottom part of a bunk bed, several feet from Eli. "Those are plague pimples. That's a plague face."

Jake proceeds to fill Ben's head with more disturbing details, including the fate of the unfortunate boy who supposedly gave the plague to Eli. (Spoiler alert: He's said to be spending his time in a mental institution playing "Jenga.")



Independent Film Co. / TNS

Kayo Martin portrays the trouble-making Jake in "The Plague."

You can tell from Ben's face that he doesn't believe any of this to be true – mostly, kinda, probably – but he does as instructed, scrubbing his skin quickly after any physical contact with the outcast. He's just trying to fit in, especially after Jake gives him a hard time about having trouble pronouncing "t" sounds, earning him the cruel nickname "Soppy" as a result. We've all been there – if roughly, not precisely.

That's why "The Plague" feels so authentic for its first long stretch: It's relatable in a way you may not enjoy thinking about, even if you were more follower than leader, more Ben than Jake, in your youth.

As the film progresses, however, Polinger skillfully blurs the line between childhood nonsense and reality in a really potent and, at times, downright chilling way, as Ben takes the inevitable turn away from Jake and toward Eli – despite the latter's odd social behavior. (To be clear, Eli's idiosyncrasies feel authentic for an outcast kid … at least for the most part.)

With the help of collaborators who include director of photography Steven Breckon, production designer Chad Keith and sound designer Damian Volpe, Polinger creates an aesthetic that evolves from lovely (the opening underwater shots) to unsettling (well, you'll see).

Plenty of heavy lifting is also done by the aforementioned actors, with Blunck ("Griffin in Summer") compelling as a preteen everyman – not exactly cool but able to vaguely fake it – and newcomer Rasmussen, who throws himself into the role of a boy trying to make the best of being separated from the group at camp.

The standout, though, is Martin, who, as the ringleader, straddles the line between angel and devil, aided by an often-present smile that can be read either way. (Also into skating and boxing, the youth has about a million Instagram followers.)

Joel Edgerton ("Boy Erased," "Train Dreams") portrays the only meaningful adult role, that of the boys' coach, Daddy Wags, and he turns in solid work, both when his character lays into Jake for his behavior and later tries to comfort Ben.

Know that a viewer isn't likely to find much comfort in "The Plague." It isn't a fun experience, the film dipping its toes into such upsetting topics as self-mutilation, but it is impactful.

Without hinting at the nature of the conclusion, Polinger sticks the landing, leaving the viewer wanting more – not of "The Plague" but of him.

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-109-DE
JUDGE
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

Estate of:
Kenneth Ray Witt
Date of birth: 04/05/1970

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Kenneth Ray Witt, died 11/20/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Harvey Witt, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 11/13/2025

Stephen K. Woods P54528
Attorney name **Bar no.**
156 South Broadway
Address
Cassopolis, MI 49031
City, state, zip
269-445-2658
Telephone

Harvey Witt
Personal representative
21575 Puterbaugh Lane
Address
Cassopolis, MI 49031
City, state, zip
574-340-0213
Telephone

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP
December 10, 2025
Meeting Summary
Meeting Called to Order at 6:30pm. All Board members present. Agenda, Minutes, and Bills and Claims were approved. Updates and Reports were given or provided.
The following motions all passed: Reappoint Ben Schilling and Rim Feirick to the Planning Commission; Reappoint Thom Brown, Wendy Colburn, Ben Schilling, Todd Tirotta to the Zoning Boards of Appeals; Reappoint Randy Hoenes to the Russom Park Board; Approved Ryan Laylin as Zoning Administrator removing the interim tag; extend present contracts with Indian Lake Fire and Sister Lakes Fire Departments for up to 60 days as per Extension Agreement; Approve R25-18 POVERTY EXEMPTION RESOLUTION; approve Budget Adjustment journal entry 506; Motion to open the 63-day comment period for the Master Plan draft; Move $1200 from Contingencies line to Treasurer's Postage line; Motion to pursue the acquisition of the Indian Lake, Dewey Lake, and Allen cemeteries.
Public Comments were heard. Meeting adjourned at 7:52pm. Detailed minutes are available on the township website: www.silvercreektwpmi.gov
JESS HONN, CLERK

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-288-DE
JUDGE
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

Estate of:
Michael Allen Luttrell
Date of birth: 03/05/1960

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Michael Allen Luttrell, died 09/17/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Sarah Martin, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 11/13/2025

Stephen K. Woods P54528
Attorney name **Bar no.**
156 South Broadway
Address
Cassopolis, MI 49031
City, state, zip
269-445-2658
Telephone

Sarah Martin
Personal representative
71417 Melvin Road
Address
Edwardsburg, MI 49112
City, state, zip
269-340-2850
Telephone

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-302-DE

Estate of:
David John Benton, Deceased
Date of birth: 08/10/1951

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, David John Benton, died 06/14/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Scott E. McIntyre, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 1108 Marshlyn Dr. Niles, MI 49120 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 12/22/2025

Thomas D. Swisher P37931
Attorney name **Bar no.**
213 Pennsylvania Ave, P.O. Box 115
Address
Dowagiac, MI 49047
City, state, zip
269-783-1609
Telephone

Scott E. McIntyre
Personal representative
1108 Marshlyn Dr.
Address
Niles, MI 49120
City, state, zip
574-360-1243
Telephone

"Notice of Self Storage Sale
Please take notice Aloha Storage located at 3001 South 11th Street, Niles, MI, 49120 intends to hold an Auction of storage unit in default of payment. **The sale will occur at the facility on 1/23/2025 at 12:00 PM.** Contents: cooling/heating air ducts and furnishings, and garage essentials. Unit #D004. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice."

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People Do Read Small Ads. You Did!

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00AM on Wednesday February 4, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE SALE –Jason Dooley and Jean Dooley, original mortgagors, granted a Mortgage to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS") acting solely as nominee for Top Flite Financial, Inc., dated November 30, 2024, and recorded December 9, 2024 as Liber 1254, Page 219; and assigned to Data Mortgage Inc., DBA Essex Mortgage by document recorded November 25, 2025 in Liber 1269, Page 516, in official records of Cass County Register of Deeds, Michigan, which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $152,673.58. The following described premises: Located in the Township of Pokagon, Cass County, Michigan: Lot(s) 18 and 19 of RIDENOUR PARK according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber LE of Plats, Page 248 of Cass County Records. Commonly known as: 33320 Ridenour Drive, Dowagiac, MI 49047 Tax Parcel ID: 14-110-200-018-00 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241, in which case the redemption period shall be 1 month, or under MCL 600.3241a 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a (b) notice, whichever is later, or extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice ATTENTION PURCHASERS: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. This notice is from a debt collector. Dated: December 22, 2025, For more information, please call: (513) 852-6066 Daniel A. Cox Wood + Lamping, LLP Attorneys for Servicer 600 Vine Street, Suite 2500, Cincinnati, OH 45202 File 25-11065 (01-03)(01-24)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 14, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Cheryl Reeves, a married couple and Ronald Reeves, a married couple
Original Mortgagee: ABN Amro Mortgage Group, Inc.
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): NewRez LLC d/b/a Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing
Date of Mortgage: February 16, 2001
Date of Mortgage Recording: March 2, 2001
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $25,159.23
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Wayne, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Parcel 1:
Lots numbered 9 and 10, Block 44 Twin Shores, Wayne Township, according to the Plat thereof as recorded in Liber 1 of Plats, Page 156, Cass County Records.
Parcel 2:
Lots 27 and 28, Block 44, Twin Shores, a Subdivision, according to the recorded Plat thereof, recorded in the office of register of deed Cass County, Michigan, said Plat being situated in Sections 15 and 16, Wayne Township, Cass County, Michigan.
Common street address (if any): 52950 Chappel St, Dowagiac, MI 49047-9452
The redemption period shall be 1 year from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: December 13, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515 1579380 (12-13)(01-03)

INVITATION FOR BIDS
Drywall Systems Removal and Replacement
Shkwéngen Apartments, 500 Hill Street, Dowagiac, MI 49047
The Pokagon Band Department of Housing & Community Development is seeking sealed bid proposals from qualified contractors for the Shkwéngen Drywall Systems Removal and Replacement Project at the Shkwéngen Apartments located at 500 Hill Street, Dowagiac, MI 49047. The project involves asbestos containing materials (ACM). The Deadline for submittal of Bids is 3:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at which time there will be a Public Bid Opening at the Department of Housing and Community Development Offices at 57824 Potawatomi Trail, Dowagiac, Michigan 49047.
The project involves the careful disconnection from drywall systems and temporary relocation of existing fixtures and appurtenances, including but not limited to cabinetry, light fixtures, appliances, and countertops within each apartment unit, to facilitate ACM containing drywall systems removal and replacement. The intent is to reinstall and reuse the temporarily relocated items which must be protected from dust and debris during the removal of ACM-containing drywall systems. Approximately 60,000 square feet of affected drywall systems will be removed and properly disposed of from walls and ceilings across three two-story apartment buildings, which include 27 residential units and a common laundry room.
Following the removal and proper disposal of the affected drywall systems, environmental clearance will be confirmed to ensure the area is safe for reentry and reconstruction. New drywall systems will then be installed in compliance with applicable building codes and refinished to match the original appearance. Once the new systems are in place, all temporarily removed items will be reinstalled in their original locations. Any fixtures and appurtenances that were removed but not suitable for reuse will be replaced to restore each unit to its pre-removal condition.
Interested contractors may obtain a copy of the bid package, or further information by contacting: Robert Torzynski, Planning Manager, Department of Housing & Community Development by telephone at (269) 462-0688 or by email at: Robert.Torzynski@PokagonBand-nsn.gov.

FORECLOSURE NOTICE (ALL COUNTIES) AS A DEBT COLLECTOR, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE. Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement – Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM a.m./p.m. on January 21, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default having been made in the terms and conditions of a certain mortgage made by Eddie L Adkins, and Paula L Adkins of Cass County, Michigan, Mortgagor to Notre Dame Federal Credit Union dated the 9th day of February, 2022, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, for the County of Cass and State of Michigan, on the 18th day of November, 2025, Liber 1268, Page 2039, of the Cass County Records on which mortgage there is claimed to be due, at the date of this notice, for principal of $36,267.38 plus accrued interest at 7.50000% percent per annum. Which said premises are described as follows: All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of Milton, in the County of Cass and State of Michigan and described as follows to wit: Part of the Northeast 1/4 of Section 14. Town 8 South, Range 16 West, described as: Beginning at the North 1/4 comer of Section 14; thence South 89 degrees 56` 00" East along the North line of said Section 249.00 feel; thence South 0 degrees 04` 00" West at right angles to said North line 327.00 feet; thence North 89 degrees 56` 00" West 248.60 feet to the North and South 1/4 line of said Section; thence North along said 1/4 line 327.00 feet to the point of beginning. Being subject to that portion along the North and West sides thereof as being used for highway purposes. Commonly known as: 70051 Brush Road, Niles, MI 49120 Tax ID: 14-070-014-003-50 If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale the borrower, pursuant to MCLA 600.3278 will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. The redemption period shall be six months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. Dated: December 20, 2025 By: Benjamin N. Hoen #P-81415 Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co., L.P.A. 5990 West Creek Road, Suite 200 Independence, OH 44131 Telephone: 216-739-5100 Fax: 216-363-4034 Email: bhoen@weltman.com WWR#: 25-000827-1. (12-20)(01-10)

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on February 11, 2026. The amount due on the Mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a Mortgage made by Richard K. Burkhart and Linda Burkhart to One Reverse Mortgage, LLC dated July 18, 2018 and recorded July 26, 2018 in Liber 1142 at Page 1901, Cass County, Michigan. Said Mortgage is now held by Longbridge Financial, LLC by assignment and/or merger. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $133,134.49. Said premises are located in Cass County, Michigan and are described as: Land situated in the Township of Newberg in the County of Cass in the State of MI ALL THAT CERTAIN PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND SITUATED IN THE TOWNSHIP OF NEWBERG, COUNTY OF CASS, AND STATE OF MICHIGAN, AND SPECIFICALLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS, TO WIT: "THAT PART OF THE WEST HALF OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 31, TOWN 6 SOUTH, RANGE 13 WEST, NEWBERG TOWNSHIP, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN DESCRIBED AS; "PARCEL A" FROM THE WEST QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION MEASURE SOUTH 89° 35' EAST, 446.90 FEET ALONG THE EAST AND WEST QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION; THENCE MEASURE NORTH 32° 50' EAST ALONG THE CENTER LINE OF LEWIS LAKE ROAD, 489.70 FEET; THENCE MEASURE NORTH 28° 55' EAST, 395.80 FEET; THENCE MEASURE NORTH 32° 50' EAST, 23.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE NORTH 75° 41' WEST, 179.99 FEET; THENCE NORTH 32° 38' EAST, 62.28 FEET; THENCE NORTH 80° 04' EAST, 232.60 FEET TO THE EAST LINE OF THE WEST HALF OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION; THENCE SOUTH 32° 50' WEST, 162.90 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. ALSO INCLUDING ALL LANDS BETWEEN THE MOST WESTERLY DESCRIBED LINE AND THE WATERS EDGE OF LEWIS LAKE. CONTAINING 0.43 ACRES." Said property is commonly known as 61336 Lewis Lake Rd, Vandalia, MI 49095. The redemption period shall be 12 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period. TO ALL PURCHASERS: The foreclosing mortgagee can rescind the sale. In that event, your damages, if any, are limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Please be advised that any third party purchaser is responsible for preparing and recording the Sheriff's Deed. If this is a residential Mortgage, the following shall apply: ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. THIS COMMUNICATION IS FROM A DEBT COLLECTOR. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT, AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. IF YOU: ARE A DEBTOR IN AN ACTIVE BANKRUPTCY CASE; ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A BANKRUPTCY STAY; OR, HAVE RECEIVED A DISCHARGE IN BANKRUPTCY AND YOU HAVE NOT REAFFIRMED THE DEBT, THIS NOTICE IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT FROM YOU PERSONALLY. Dated: December 8, 2025 Attorney for the party foreclosing the Mortgage: Thomas E. McDonald (P39312) Brock & Scott, PLLC 5431 Oleander Drive Wilmington, NC 28403 PHONE: (844) 856-6646 File No. 25-32312. (12-13)(01-03)

OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Photos by Ryan Yuenger / HP correspondent

Sun shines on a snow-covered sand dune at Grand Mere State Park as another dark snow squall forms just offshore in November.

New year, same me

Repurposing a 2025 new year's revelation for 2026

The sunset shines through icicles hanging off the south pier in January 2025.

The sun sets over an ice shelf on Lake Michigan in January 2025.

Ryan Yuenger

Wise words are worth repeating.

At least that's what I'm telling myself as I try to fight off a mild holiday flu this week.

Rather than worsen my condition by trying to rack my brain all night for inspiration, I've decided to repackage a particularly inspired column I wrote to begin 2025 – *Rethinking new year's resolutions on an icy dune hike* – with some of my favorite winter photos from the year:

New year, same me

With the bitter winter wind stinging my cheeks and snow crunching under my boots, a familiar cliché echoes through the halls of my head like whispers of a forgotten past.

New year, new me.

It sure sounds nice, the thought of becoming a new version of myself – setting ablaze everything I didn't like about the past year and emerging like a phoenix from the ashes.

The cleansing fire sure sounds warm, at least.

Halfway up the dune side, my lips begin to crack. Frozen sand and ice mix to create a false sense of stability under my feet. As I slip and stumble over the ridge, I can't help but wonder if New Year's resolutions also create a false sense – but of self.

Whether inspired by too many holiday treats or the onset of winter madness, New Year's resolutions can feel like feel like a warm blanket to toss over my insecurities. But the end of the day, the desire to be better never fades.

New year, new me.

Could it be the ghosts of past resolutions haunting me? Perhaps I didn't live up to the persona I created last time the pressure of a new year tried to squeeze the joy from my cold veins.

Perhaps I created my own disappointment and am responsible for the perpetual cycle of needing to become something other than myself.

New year, new me.

My right big toe starts to go numb from the sandy snow that snuck into my shoe, and all these resolutions start to sound more like delusions.

New me? What about the old me? I was just starting to kind of like that guy. It would be a shame if I had to start all over.

This year, I'm going to try something different. Rather than a resolution, it's time for a new year's revelation:

New year, same me. Only this year, I'm going to set some expectations.

I expect to be kind – both to myself and those around me.

I expect to get outside as much as possible, and see some new sights around southwest Michigan.

I expect to enjoy each day, even in the benign moments of simplicity, because today is all I am guaranteed.

I expect to learn from both my mistakes and my successes, and use them to become a better person should I wake up tomorrow.

Most importantly, I expect to be myself – and hope the same for you. No matter who you are or what your struggles may be, you will always be you. There's no need to be anyone else, even if you feel external pressure to be.

Just like Dr. Seuss taught many of us as children, "*Today you are you. That is truer than true. There is no one alive that is youer than you.*"

Every day is a revelation, and needs no resolution. The imaginary line between December and January does not need to signify anything except that the Winter Solstice has passed.

The days are getting brighter. Let them fill you up as you exist within every moment this year.

New year, same you.

Ryan Yuenger is an HP Correspondent. He can be reached at ryuenger@thehp.com.

A close-up of the ice shelf on Lake Michigan in January 2025.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

Winter Bird Quest: 8 a.m.-noon Jan. 17. Join Sarett for winter birding around Berrien County, visiting a few of the best winter hot-spots to find a variety of birds visiting us for the winter. Call (269) 927-4832 to register. Members $10, Non-members $15.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

Bison return to Kane County after 200 years, a crucial step for conservation

By ADRIANA PÉREZ
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

From their cozy homes in suburban Burlington, children curiously watch their new neighbors through windows and brainstorm nicknames.

Earlier this month, with their distinctive brown fur, big heads, short horns and back hump, a small herd of six American buffalo – the largest land mammals in the country – exited a trailer and took their first steps on 38 acres of prairie restored by the Kane County Forest Preserve District, 60 miles northwest of downtown Chicago. It's the first time in over two centuries that bison have called the county home.

Inches of snow had piled on the ground, and conservationists had waited for hours in the brutal cold for the animals to show up.

The move was a rematriation, a return of missing relatives, according to Jay Young, co-executive director of the American Indian Center of Chicago, which owns the animals in the collaborative conservation effort.

"I don't like using the word ownership, because that's not a Native or Indigenous worldview," Young said. "We are the stewards of the bison, and so we're looking after them, we're taking care of them, we're making sure they're OK."

The Kane Forest Preserve began working toward bringing back bison three years ago, but the project "transcends generations" and has been "hundreds of years in the making," according to the district's executive director, Benjamin Haberthur. After an initial deal fell through, staff at the district felt discouraged about finding an Indigenous partner, until the American Indian Center stepped in.

"Without the Native American education component, (it) would have been a huge loss, because the story of the bison is the story of Native Americans in the country," he said.

Haberthur saw Burlington Prairie Forest Preserve, formerly a soybean field, begin its journey to restoration in 2011, helping plant 114 species, including the ecosystem's iconic, tall Indian grass and the rattlesnake master with its thistle-shaped flowerheads.

The bison's return marks yet another victory in efforts to restore the Prairie State to its former glory, to an ecosystem and a landscape that bison shaped for hundreds of years – before settlers plowed grasslands, brought cattle to graze in the vast pastures and hunted the animals, extirpating them. The last recorded sighting of a wild bison in Illinois happened in 1870.

"We look at all of these things as relatives, whether it be the prairie grass or the bison," Young said. "They evolved over thousands of years together, so a prairie without bison or bison without prairie is missing something."

The 22 million acres of prairies that once spanned Illinois depended on the grazing patterns of bison, which diversified native vegetation, maintained habitats for birds and cleared out invasive species. Most of this ecosystem was gone by the beginning of the 20th century. By 1978, fewer than 2,300 acres of high-quality original prairie remained; nowadays, the acreage is less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the original.

The razing of prairies and the erosion of soil from agriculture have led to the loss of plant and animal species, such as prairie chickens. The species, which Haberthur called "bold little territorial birds," are critically endangered in the state, with 200 left in southeast central Illinois.

Bringing bison back opens up the possibility for the return of similar ecological missing pieces.

The brown-headed cowbird, which is common year-round in Illinois, used to be called the buffalo bird for its relationship with bison.

"It's just one of these little guys that, like, sits on the back of a cow or buffalo and eats the ticks and little bugs," Haberthur said. "So it changed its behavior after the buffalo left, but at Nachusa, they've seen them start to reassociate and rebuild that."

The first herd of bison reintroduced east of the Mississippi River for conservation purposes was in 2014 at Nachusa Grasslands, some 50 miles west in Lee and Ogle counties, where the newcomers at Burlington Prairie hail from. In 2015, Nachusa welcomed the first baby bison born in Illinois in nearly two centuries. That same year, another restoration project brought bison to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Will County, operated by the U.S. Forest Service. Other herds in Illinois that are not specifically part of conservation efforts include one outside Fermilab particle physics laboratory in Batavia since 1969, and an exhibit at Lords Park Zoo in Elgin since 2013.

When the large animals wallow – or roll in the dirt for a "dust bath" to relieve skin irritations, prevent insect bites and shed their winter coats – they also create small depressions in the ground that fill with water and create microhabitats for other wildlife.

"Different plants start coming back, that means different insects come back. Different insects come back, that means different birds come back," Young said. "And so, being the keystone species, they create this whole ecosystem around the prairie, which is what it was supposed to be until bison were eliminated."

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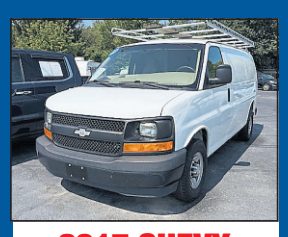

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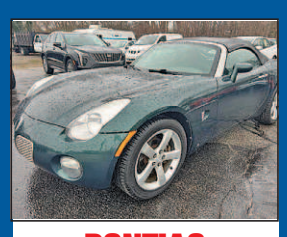

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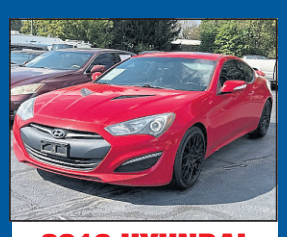

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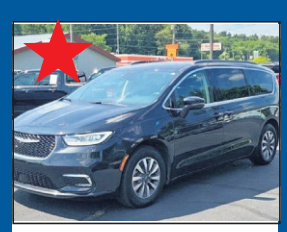

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